

# MODERN DRAMA

*A Journal Devoted to the Drama Since Ibsen*

Issued four times yearly—May, September, December, and February. Subscription price \$2.00. Single copies \$1.00. Articles should not exceed 8,000 words. Book reviews should be limited to 500 words. Address contributions to A. C. Edwards, Department of English, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas.

---

*Editor*

A. C. EDWARDS  
University of Kansas

*Associate Editors*

WALTER J. MESERVE  
University of Kansas

ROBERT G. SHEDD  
Ohio State University

*Foreign Editors*

JACQUES SCHERER  
The Sorbonne

WILLIAM A. ARMSTRONG  
University of London

GUILLERMO DÍAZ-PLAJA  
Instituto del Teatro, Barcelona

*Editorial Assistant*  
MARTHA T. EISSENSTAT

---

VOLUME IV

Numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4

---

## Table of Contents

	Page
Experiment and Vision in Ionesco's Plays . . . . .	RICHARD M. EASTMAN 3
A Note on Perception and Communication in Beckett's <i>Endgame</i> . . . . .	ALLAN BRICK 20
The New Open-air Drama in France: Rediscovery and Renascence . . . . .	KENNETH S. WHITE 23
Translation and Adaptation in the Contemporary Drama . . . . .	HENRY KNEPLER 31
The Theater of Albert Camus . . . . .	RIMA DRELL RECK 42
Maeterlinck and the Quest for a Mystic Tragedy of the Twentieth Century . . . . .	CALVIN EVANS 54
Benavente on Shakespearean Characters . . . . .	KESSEL SCHWARTZ 60
The Prelate and the Pachyderm: Rear Guard and Vanguard Drama in the French Theater . . . . .	LEONARD C. PRONKO 63
<i>The Vultures</i> : Beque's Realistic Comedy of Manners . . . . .	CARL W. WOOTON 72
The Stature of Arthur Schnitzler . . . . .	CLAUDE HILL 80
Recent Developments and Problems in the Study of German Expressionist Drama . . . . .	WALTER SOKEL 92
A Scene from an Unpublished Version of Frank Wedekind's <i>Lulu-Tragedy</i> . . . . .	KADIDJA WEDEKIND-BIEL 97
Book Reviews . . . . .	101

<b>Books Received</b>		107
The Shallows of Modern Serious Drama	ANTHONY CAPUTI	111
Charles Rogers: Late Victorian Provincial Playwright	CLAUDE R. FLORY	117
The Anti-Theater of W. B. Yeats	ANNA SANDBERG	131
The Ibsenite Maugham	JOHN STEWARD FIELDEN	138
Edith Wharton and <i>The House of Mirth</i> : The Novelist Writes for the Theater	G. M. LONEY	152
A Week in Dublin	VIRGINIA MOSELEY	164
Theater in Paris	FRANÇOISE KOURILSKY	172
Theater in Spain (1960-61)	GUILLERMO DÍAZ-PLAJA	179
Tradition and Innovation in the London Theater, 1960-61	WILLIAM A. ARMSTRONG	184
Forty Years of O'Neill Criticism: A Selected Bibliography	JACKSON R. BRYER	196
Book Reviews		217
<i>The House on the North Circular Road</i> : Fragments from a Biography	GABRIEL FALLON	223
The Sources and Themes of <i>The Plough and the Stars</i>	W. A. ARMSTRONG	234
O'Casey's Dramatic Apprenticeship	ROBERT HOGAN	243
Sean O'Casey and the Road to Expressionism	VINCENT C. DE BAUN	254
O'Casey's Dramatic Symbolism	KATHARINE J. WORTH	260
"The Rageous Ossean": Patron-Hero of Synge and O'Casey	DAVID KRAUSE	268
Synge and the Celtic Revival	DAVID H. GREENE	292
A Player's Reflections on <i>Playboy</i>	CYRIL CUSACK	300
Synge's Last Play: "And a Story Will Be Told For Ever".	HAROLD OREL	306
The Making of the <i>Playboy</i>	PATRICIA MEYER SPACKS	314
Sean O'Casey: A Biography and an Appraisal	DENIS JOHNSTON	324
Book Reviews		329
Books Received		336
The 1961 MLA Conference on Modern Drama	HENRY KNEPLER	339
Bernard Shaw on the Tightrope	MARGERY M. MORGAN	343
Fry's Cosmic Vision	ANNE GREENE	355
<i>An American Tragedy</i> as Epic Theater: The Piscator Dramatization	JOHN C. WENTZ	365
Dionysus in <i>The Iceman Cometh</i>	LEONARD CHABROWE	377
Christ Symbolism in <i>Anna Christie</i>	JOHN J. McALEER	389
<i>Purgatory</i>	RONALD GASKELL	397
Pinter and Whiting: Two Attitudes Toward the Alienated Artist	JACQUELINE HOEFER	402
Willy Loman's Brother Ben: Tragic Insight in <i>Death of a Salesman</i>	SISTER M. BETTINA, SSND	409
The Conflict of Wills in Shaw's Tragicomedy	NORBERT F. O'DONNELL	413
A Note of Frost's <i>A Masque of Reason</i>	ELLEN DOUGLASS LEYBURN	426
The Propaganda Play	GORDON C. GREEN	429
The Square Root of Ibsen	RICHARD B. VOWLES	431
Book Reviews		436

The following back numbers of *Modern Drama* are available at one dollar per copy:

- Volume I, Number 2;
- Volume II, Numbers 3 and 4;
- Volumes III and IV, All Numbers.

# MODERN DRAMA

---

VOLUME 4

MAY, 1961

NUMBER 1

---

## Table of Contents

Experiment and Vision in Ionesco's Plays . . . . .	RICHARD M. EASTMAN	3
A Note on Perception and Communication in Beckett's <i>Endgame</i> . . . . .	ALLAN BRICK	20
The New Open-air Drama in France: Rediscovery and Renascence . . . . .	KENNETH S. WHITE	23
Translation and Adaptation in the Contemporary Drama . . . . .	HENRY KNEPLER	31
The Theater of Albert Camus . . . . .	RIMA DRELL RECK	42
Maeterlinck and the Quest for a Mystic Tragedy of the Twentieth Century . . . . .	CALVIN EVANS	54
Benavente on Shakespearean Characters . . . . .	KESSEL SCHWARTZ	60
The Prelate and the Pachyderm: Rear Guard and Vanguard Drama in the French Theater . . . . .	LEONARD C. PRONKO	63
<i>The Vultures</i> : Becque's Realistic Comedy of Manners . . . . .	CARL W. WOOTON	72
The Stature of Arthur Schnitzler . . . . .	CLAUDE HILL	80
Recent Developments and Problems in the Study of German Expressionist Drama . . . . .	WALTER SOKEL	92
A Scene from an Unpublished Version of Frank Wedekind's <i>Lulu-Tragedy</i> . . . . .	KADIDJA WEDEKIND-BIEL	97
Book Reviews . . . . .		101
Books Received . . . . .		107

---

## Note

Our next special issue (December, 1961) will be concerned with Synge and O'Casey. The deadline for submission of manuscripts for this issue is September 1, 1961.

## The Contributors

RICHARD M. EASTMAN. Chairman of English at North Central College, Naperville, Illinois. Professor Eastman has published articles on Beckett, Dostoyevsky, the theory of fiction, and the theory of drama.

ALLAN BRICK. Professor Brick teaches English at Dartmouth College. He has published articles on nineteenth and twentieth century literature and is presently at work on a book about philosophic idealism in Victorian poetry and fiction.

KENNETH S. WHITE. Currently teaching French at the University of Michigan, Dr. White has recently contributed to *Books Abroad*, *The French Review*, and *Renascence*. At present he is working on a book on Lenormand and on studies of Marcel Ayme and Georges Neveux.

HENRY KNEPLER. Professor Knepler, who teaches English at Illinois Institute of Technology, is co-author of *A Range of Writing* and author of articles on the drama in journals in the United States and abroad.

RIMA DRELL RECK. Dr. Reck teaches French at Tulane University. She has written articles on Françoise, Mallet-Joris, Simone de Beauvoir, Malraux, and Camus.

CALVIN EVANS. Mr. Evans is at present a member of the Department of Foreign Languages at Louisiana State University. He has contributed articles on the cinema and the theater to *Shenandoah* and *Fresco*.

KESSEL SCHWARTZ. Professor Schwartz is Chairman of the Department of Romance Languages at the University of Arkansas.

LEONARD C. PRONKO. Professor Pronko teaches French at Pomona College. He has published articles in *Modern Language Forum* and has translated essays by Ionesco and Achard for *Theatre Arts*. His book, *The World of Jean Anouilh*, has recently been published by the University of California Press.

CARL W. WOOTON. An assistant in the Department of English at The University of Southwestern Louisiana, Mr. Wooton has contributed a critical study on modern poetry to *Arizona Quarterly* and poetry to *The Ave Maria Magazine*.

CLAUDE HILL. Associate Professor of German at Rutgers University, Dr. Hill is a regular contributor to *Saturday Review*, *Books Abroad*, *Universitas*, and other periodicals.

WALTER SOKEL. Author of *The Writer in Extremis*, recently published by Stanford University Press, and of numerous articles on Kafka, Musil, and the Expressionists, Dr. Sokel is Associate Professor of German Literature and Humanities at Columbia University.

KADIDJA WEDEKIND-BIEL. Mrs. Wedekind-Biel has been giving a series of lectures in this country on her father's life and works.

## EXPERIMENT AND VISION IN IONESCO'S PLAYS

GREEN PIMPLES on a beige skin, self-propelled furniture, a heroine with three noses, a random-striking clock, a flaming horse's mane flying through the air—such theatrical novelties have made the French-Romanian playwright Eugène Ionesco a conversation-piece of the fifties. He invites ingenious labeling. One may call him a Chekhov of the bizarre, a Salvador Dali of the stage, an intoxicated Beckett, naturalist of the unnatural, etc. His plays draw a wide range of popular critical response, of which the American reaction may be cited as typical. Some judgments are conservatively indignant: "hollow and pretentious fakery" (Richard Watts); "perfectly awful" (Wolcott Gibbs). Others are patronizingly urbane: "an agreeable but thin talent" (*Time*); "these odd, elliptical fantastifications are amusing and provocative" (Brooks Atkinson). Others rise to warm welcome: "a master of a novel theatre language" (Harold Clurman); "a refreshing application of pure theatre" (Henry Hewes). Perhaps it is time to examine seriously Eugène Ionesco's output to date, as I shall do in the first section of the following essay, then his dramatic ingenuity, his artistic vision, and finally his presumed potential.

Eugène Ionesco belongs to that contemporary generation of Parisian dramatists who have made a seismic impact upon the intellectual theater: Sartre, Camus, Anouilh, Genet, Beckett, Adamov, and others. Of these, Ionesco is most often associated with Beckett and Adamov (Jean Paris calls them "the three French Hamlets").

Ionesco himself was born in Slatina, Romania, on November 13, 1912.<sup>1</sup> He spent his childhood in France, then returned to Romania in early adolescence. After becoming a teacher of French and a critic of literature, he came back to settle in France in 1938. With a publisher of law books he found work which has seen him well into his present career. He became a producing playwright but hardly a successful one with the May, 1950, première of *The Bald Soprano* (*la Cantatrice chauve*). This play was followed by *The Lesson* (*la Leçon*, composed 1950), *Jack or the Submission* (*Jacques ou la soumission*, composed 1950), *The Chairs* (*les Chaises*, 1951), and *Victims of Duty* (*Victimes du devoir*, 1952). With the 1954 production of his first full-length play, *Amédée or How to Get Rid of It* (*Amédée ou*

1. See "Bibliographical Note" for sources of this section. Where I have assigned composition dates, my source has been the endnotes to the plays in the Gallimard edition. American première dates have been obtained from the monthly *Theatre Arts* listings. The place and date of Ionesco's birth are variously reported; for this article I referred to M. Ionesco through his publisher.

(*comment s'en débarrasser*, 1953), Ionesco began to find a strongly interested public. He could now revive old failures such as *The Chairs*, as well as produce unstaged earlier efforts such as *Jack*. In 1957 a double bill of *The Bald Soprano* and *The Lesson* ran to 300 performances. His plays since *Amédée* include *The New Tenant* (*le Nouveau locataire*, 1953), *Improvisation or The Shepherd's Chameleon* (*l'Impromptu de l'Alma ou le caméléon du berger*, 1955), his second full-length play, *The Killer* (*Tueur sans gages*, 1957), and his third full-length play, *Rhinoceros* (*le Rhinocéros*, published 1959).

His drama has been presented to highly curious audiences elsewhere on the continent and especially in London. He has reached American production with off-Broadway premières of *Amédée* in 1955, *The Bald Soprano* and *The Lesson* in 1956, *The Chairs* and *Jack* in 1958, *The Killer* and *The Shepherd's Chameleon* in 1960. *Rhinoceros* was given a Broadway première in early 1961. In 1958 Grove Press brought out two volumes in translation: *Four Plays* and *Three Plays*. *The Killer and Other Plays* and *Rhinoceros* followed in 1960.

Besides his steady production of dramatic scripts, Ionesco has been sufficiently voluble as essayist and as one who has been often interviewed to start a flow of short but significant theoretical statements. Several are available in English.

## 2

The experimental theater of the twentieth century has yielded so many new stage devices that Ionesco, in any one instance, might be proved a borrower; but in his passion to exploit, combine, and make conspicuous all the idioms of fantasy, he shows an undeniably fertile talent in all six of Aristotle's dramatic elements—spectacle, sound, diction, thought, character, and plot. Of course his characteristic ingenuity is most easily described where novelty is cheapest—in spectacle and use of sound.

For Ionesco, the animate world often fuses with the inanimate. An expanding corpse gradually fills the setting of *Amédée*; as if in sympathy with it, giant mushrooms sprout from the floors. When *Amédée* and his wife finally push the corpse out through a window, the whole setting trembles and cracks as if the corpse had been rooted in it. Characters may walk stiff-leggedly like puppets. Furniture may move spontaneously, clocks may strike and bells may ring "at will."

Ionesco manipulates the law of gravity, either annulling it or multiplying it. *Amédée* flies into the air; in *Victims of Duty* Choubert must be anchored down to earth by his wife and the Detective. At the other extreme are impressions of intolerable heaviness and crowdedness, as if the universe were collapsing inward. *The New Tenant* consists of little, visually, except the carrying-in of furniture until the new lodger

is hopelessly penned in; indeed the audience is told that the stairways, the streets, the subways, the whole world has congested with furniture converging on this one room. This visual theme of crowdedness can be worked out anatomically, as with the gigantic cop of *The Killer*, or Roberta II, the heroine of *Jack*, who has three noses and a left hand with nine fingers. It can be worked out as repetitious or accelerated action, as in the wild climax of doorbell-ringing, door-flappings, chair-totting in *The Chairs*, or the furious police whistles, commands, and semaphoric hand-signals of the traffic-bottleneck episode in *The Killer*.

The visible, audible world sometimes borders another world, invisible and inaudible. Thus the guests in *The Chairs* are neither seen nor heard, although the Old Man and the Old Woman can speak with them and apparently see and hear them. A "sound curtain" may prevent two characters from hearing one another, as in *Victims of Duty*, where Choubert and his pseudo-father talk alternately but without connection. The settings may be laid in cross-grained lim<sup>1</sup>ns. Amédée and his wife live in a flat where neither mail nor visitors have penetrated for years. The Old Couple of *The Chairs* live in a house surrounded by waters. Characters may leave by one exit to re-enter almost immediately from the opposite wing. One plane of stage reality may frame still another one. Thus the deadly battle between Mother Peep and the Drunkard in *The Killer* is staged behind a low wall, like a Punch and Judy show. At one point in *Victims of Duty*, Choubert steps onto a small stage-on-the-stage to continue his introspection, while the other characters form his audience.

Both light-effects and sound-effects occur arbitrarily. From the limbs of a barren tree in the closing dusk of *The Killer*, falls the leaf of an old newspaper—a visual pun. A trumpet sounds as the invisible Colonel enters in *The Chairs*. Light intensifies as the room fills with guests; fireworks and fanfares brighten the night as the Old Couple take farewell. The lighting turns aquatic green during the seduction scene in *Jack*. In *Rhinoceros*, stylized images of rhinoceros heads appear on the rear wall, to become more numerous and beautiful as the play closes; the pachydermous trumpetings from off-stage become similarly more rhythmic and melodious.

Setting, so treated, acquires a new and profitable logic of its own. In traditional theater, setting serves as a literal context for the action: i.e., it represents a real time and place governed, though elastically, by the physical laws. In the impressionist and expressionist theaters, the setting becomes the objectification of a consciousness (the author's or a character's) and observes the workings of that consciousness. But in Ionesco's theater, setting can become a free commentary—a bright succession of sounds and images each of which vivifies the connota-

tions of a stage moment and then gives way to the next. It might not be too much to call Ionesco's setting a visual flow of metaphor exerting in its arbitrary quality something of the force of miracle and remaining so utterly plastic that the dramatist can shift emphasis at will.

A common complaint against playwrights who rely so much on "production" is that they neglect language. Eugène Ionesco does not. He enjoys a high and flexible power of verbal composition which he exploits for distinctively theatrical purposes. He is a master of comic banality. He is alike capable of a rich and coherent sentimentality (thus the parental rhapsody in *Victims of Duty*) and of a special surrealist lyricism which can be illustrated by this siren-song of Roberta II in *Jack*:

Come on . . . don't be afraid . . . I'm moist . . . My necklace is made of mud, my breasts are dissolving, my pelvis is wet, I've got water in my crevasses, I'm sinking down. My true name is Liza. In my belly, there are pools, swamps . . . I've got a house of clay. I'm always cool . . . There's moss . . . big flies, cockroaches, sowbugs, toads. Under the wet covers they make love . . . they're swollen with happiness! I wrap my arms around you like snakes; with my soft thighs . . . you plunge down and you dissolve . . . in my locks which drizzle, drizzle, rain, rain. My mouth trickles down, my legs trickle, my naked shoulders trickle, my hair trickles, everything trickles down, runs, everything trickles, the sky trickles down, the stars run, trickle down, trickle . . .<sup>2</sup>

Ionesco's most obvious experiments in style are found in his frequent explorations of "abstract" (i.e., non-referential) language. A speech may be mechanically duplicated, as if to underscore the absence of communication. It may be ritually reiterated, as in the "How curious" chorus between Mr. and Mrs. Martin, the husband and wife of *The Bald Soprano* who discover that they have met each other. In *Jack* extra syllables creep into the diction; pointless puns and transposed word-orders add to the verbal deterioration. A climax is reached in the seduction scene, as Roberta II discovers that "all we need to designate things is one word"; thereupon she reduces all messages to "cat, cat, cat, cat. . ." Often Ionesco seems to treat language as pure sound effect: a point underscored by his dictating arbitrary increases of volume or changes of intonation during given scenes. Thus dialogue can become abstract music, with the actors as orchestra. In a special effect which can be called "contrapuntal dialogue," the audience hears two conversations, alternating but independent, occasionally coinciding in identical phrases, then drifting apart again. *Rhinoceros*

2. *Four Plays*, pp. 107-108. The luxuriant alliterations of the French may be suggested by this closing sentence from the original speech: "Ma bouche dégoule, dégoule mes jambes, mes épaules nues dégoule, mes cheveux dégoule, tout dégoule, coule, tout dégoule, le ciel dégoule, les étoiles coulent, dégoule, goulent. . ." (*Théâtre*, I, 120).

uses this device for an extraordinary ironic contrast between a bourgeois lecture on self-improvement, on the one hand, and a delightfully mad discourse on logic, on the other.

The abrogation of language convention also relates to the peculiar way in which Ionesco's characters think and reason. Ionesco discards the axiom that one may not say "Yes" and "No" to the same proposition at the same time. In every play naked contradiction is utterly possible, not to say axiomatic. Thus Mr. Smith says, in *The Bald Soprano*:

She has regular features and yet one cannot say that she is pretty. She is too big and stout. Her features are not regular but still one can say that she is very pretty. She is a little too small and too thin. She's a voice teacher.

In *Jack* Mother Jack cries, "I'm completely half-desperate." Jack tells Roberta II: "When I was born, I was almost fourteen years old." The Old Woman of *The Chairs* speaks fondly of their one son, as her husband across the room confides that "we've never had a child."

Normal logical relationships are often inverted. The banal is seen as astonishing, as in Mrs. Martin's excitement over having seen a man tie his shoes. The obvious is sophisticated, as in the Professor's labored attempt to teach a doctoral candidate the names of the four seasons, in *The Lesson*. Opposites are equated: thus Choubert finds that both a cosmic disturbance and a dog's committing a nuisance justify the inference, "Nothing ever happens." Identities are differentiated: thus the Professor relates that a friend with faulty diction could not help pronouncing "f" like "f." Effect precedes cause: thus when Mother Jack was pregnant with Jack, she proudly showed his photograph to all the neighbors. Opaque details may be inserted having no ascertainable bearing. "I haven't got thirty-three hands, you know, I'm not a cow," says the Old Woman of *The Chairs*. Mary, the maid of *The Bald Soprano*, announces irrelevantly: "I bought me a chamber pot."

Altogether the spectator of Ionesco's plays finds himself in a non-Euclidean universe, so to speak, where parallel lines do meet. This alien world is amazingly filled with human life. With a self-evident vitality, its people express joy and pain, they become involved. Their inverted dialectic is true, though hyperbolically, to human irrationality: the human refusal to face fact or to rise above it. On another level, their nonsense often has an internal sense to it. For example, Jack's family *sniff* at his fiancée as if she were a dog being inspected by other dogs. The action though literally absurd is metaphorically strong. The Old Couple of *The Chairs* bark to the Emperor in canine subservience. Amédée's prudish bride tells him: "Don't touch me. You sting, sting, sting."

On still another level, Ionesco is replacing the customary issues of

dramatic conflict by "arbitrary issues" which despite their grotesqueness are treated by the characters in perfect earnest. *Rhinoceros* shows a whole city struggling against an epidemic which transforms its victims into rhinoceros. The Professor of *The Lesson* works up to a homicidal sadism over his pupil's pronunciation of "knife." The street-crowd of *The Killer* is stirred into a revolutionary lather by the double-think crusade of Mother Peep and her geese. The tension of the first episode of *Jack* is created by Jack's reluctance to adore hashed brown potatoes. Few capitulating sons have aroused such joy as that exhibited by the family when Jack finally does renounce his dietary quirk.

The first advantage offered by Ionesco's "arbitrary issue" is that the issue can exert a wide symbolic force. To adore hashed brown potatoes may be to adore the middle-class diet, or the middle-class outlook generally, or the Mom-centered kitchen, or the practical and deadly business of asking "What shall we eat?" Because the symbol can generate so many related analogies, the spectator may engage with it on the terms most vital to him; but the dramatist retains precision of attitude (here, of ridicule). Secondly, the arbitrary issue, exactly because it does lack content as an issue, encourages the spectator to focus not on questions of policy but on questions of psychology. He will watch the characters' outlooks and conflict-patterns, instead of tracing the growth of argument. If the dramatist believes, as Ionesco apparently does, that life suffocates under the web of abstract reason, the arbitrary issue allows him to retain the theatrical impact of issues without sacrifice of concreteness.<sup>3</sup>

Ionesco's characters are not distinct, carefully developed individuals, despite their strange vigor. They are more likely to embody certain large attitudes (of a given time-of-life, of a given social class, of a given temperament). They often bear the most generalized names (Old Man, Detective, Architect, Mr. and Mrs. Smith). Ionesco's use of the same name, Bérenger, for the heroes of *The Killer* and *Rhinoceros* suggests even that he sees the character itself as transplantable. Allegorically his characters are therefore suggestive just as the arbitrary issue is suggestive. The Professor of *The Lesson*, for example, can be taken as the type of the Teacher, of sexually insecure Middle Age, of Authority, of the eternal Older Generation.

Ionesco often violates the conventions of character continuity and character identity. The Old Woman of *The Chairs*, initially presented as a sweet senile wife, metamorphoses briefly into a horrid ancient prostitute as she babbles orgiastically to the invisible Photo-Engraver;

3. The present discussion is focused on the general theatrical utility of Ionesco's techniques. The peculiar relevance of this and other devices to Ionesco's own outlook will be treated further in the next section.

then she recedes into her basic role, having thus enacted a shocking, buried quirk. The Old Man melts into a sobbing baby boy being rocked by his maternal old wife. A large portion of *Victims of Duty* is devoted to Choubert's pantomimed descent into his own past. Flashbacks and subjective fantasies are not unusual, of course; but Ionesco's conception of the past and the hidden as erupting casually into the stage action is rarely effective.

An unidentified actor may appear on stage, such as the inscrutable Lady of *Victims of Duty*, who simply sits page after page until the time comes for her to utter the curtain-line. Several characters may bear the same name, as in *Jack*; or they may be mysteriously linked by some common badge, as in *The Killer*, where sinister briefcases are found in the hands of the Architect, Edward, the Drunk, the Old Man, and Mother Peep. One character may become another one. In *Victims of Duty* the Detective and Madeleine drop their own roles in order to play Choubert's parents. As Choubert mounts the small stage to act an actor acting himself, the other two assume roles of typical theater-goers, with occasional reversion to their proper roles. Character-change may occur without any internal psychological necessity, but arbitrarily, as if imposed from outside. Thus the Professor begins *The Lesson* as a timid obsequious tutor addressing a lively young maiden; he transforms imperceptibly into a sadistic male tyrannizing over a paralyzed victim. And so the victims of the epidemic in *Rhinoceros* undergo a spontaneous psychological coarsening which corresponds with their sudden acquisition of tough, green hides.

The theatrical value of most of these devices is that they exploit the function of the actor. One virtue of *acting over being* is that the actor need not respect the slow evolutions, the prison-like identities of real people. He may, like a child at make-believe, mimic a dozen poses in succession, a life-cycle in a minute. The traditional theater, although it has almost never supposed itself to reproduce life photographically, has had none the less a fairly limited range of acting styles; it has moreover expected consistency of style as a condition of stage probability. Ionesco's theater challenges the actor to be pure actor throughout, and thereby attains a remarkable plasticity of impersonation. The requirement upon playwright and producer is simply that the signals be kept clear so that the audience may follow the "game." The frequent role-changes in *Victims of Duty* are not at all baffling, once it is seen that Choubert's search for his own secret is at the center; Madeleine and the Detective play whatever parts are needed to define Choubert's position.

Ionesco professes to reject conventional ideas of plot, if by "plot" is meant a necessary rise or fall in the status of a chief character. He

uses paradoxical sub-titles such as "Anti-Play," "Pseudo-Drama," "A Tragic Farce" to advertise his distrust of traditional specifications. Still, his plays do have enough unity of action to impress the careful reader that an important event has begun, developed, and ended. The fall of the protagonist is seen in *The Lesson*, *Jack*, *The Chairs*, *The New Tenant*, and *The Killer*; the triumph of the protagonist is seen in *Amédée* and *Rhinoceros*. Two other plays—*The Bald Soprano* and *Victims of Duty*—make the legitimate point that nothing really can happen under the circumstances.

What Ionesco does do is to blur the plot design. All the techniques described so far, because they modify the spectator's normal standards of inference, help to disguise the trend of action on stage. In particular the "arbitrary issue," itself obscure, may be dropped and replaced by another, even though the basic plot pattern continues underneath. *Jack*, having begun with the family crisis over hashed brown potatoes, shifts to the question of whether Jack's fiancée should have two or three noses. Similar shifts occur in *The Bald Soprano*, *Amédée*, *Victims of Duty*, and *The Killer*. The total result—when such methods succeed—is to render the spectator abnormally sensitive to the immediate moment on stage, to encourage him to accept with a primitive wonder the brightness and mystery of events whose "sense" is latent.

## 3

What vision of life has Ionesco chosen to reveal through this unique stagecraft, and how does he do it? His plays show the imminent victory of what he has called "anti-spiritual forces": of what Pronko calls "the dead thing over that which is alive."<sup>4</sup> Thus the Gentleman of *The New Tenant* rents a sixth-story room and then orders in all his furniture until he is left penned up in the darkness with a handful of dead flowers. To put it differently, Ionesco deals with little people (for him there are no big people, only children grown up): people isolated, sometimes frightened, irritable, and possessed, sometimes tender and naïvely courageous. They are being paralyzed by the "killer without pay"—a congealing anti-human universe which presses the joy from life; as routine, it hardens men into robots; as mechanical intellect, it forces the imagination into cold claptrap. Unamenable to reason or to trust, to mind or to heart, it makes but one response to all human dreams of "the radiant city": an unemphatic snigger in the darkness.

The Old Couple of *The Chairs*, terribly senile, invite a handful of

4. Leonard C. Pronko, "The Anti-Spiritual Victory in the Theater of Ionesco," *Modern Drama*, II (May, 1959), 29–35. I wish here to express thanks to Mr. Pronko for his helpful answers to my inquiries concerning the present study.

celebrities to hear the Orator deliver the Old Man's parting message—a speech which is to prove the harmony and force of his mediocre and tedious life. Then they plunge out the windows in a death-rhapsody of farewells and fireworks. The Orator, it turns out, babbles like a deaf-mute; in frustration he scribbles on a blackboard what turns out to be nonsense. *The Bald Soprano* shows a half-dozen suburbanites trapped in a squirrel's cage of banality. The pedantic course of *The Lesson* transforms the Professor into a voracious sadist, his blooming Pupil into a corpse. In *Jack* the young hero is coerced, partly by family pressure, partly by sex drive, into a monstrous marriage. *Victims of Duty*, though specially conceived as a parable of the state of the drama, shows a kind of Everyman, Choubert, being endlessly tormented; *The Shepherd's Chameleon*, another such parable, shows Ionesco himself in torment, although comically. The tormentors are those who reduce drama—or human nature—to formula. And *Rhinoceros* shows men becoming pachyderms.

The full-length comedy, *Amédée*, will show in detail this theme of anti-spiritual victory, as well as Ionesco's intuition of a human worth which survives it. Act I introduces Amédée Buccinioni, an out-of-elbows timid soul who for many years has been imprisoned in a barely furnished flat with his wife Madeleine, a virago gnarled by chronic worry. The next room has long contained a male corpse. Of late the corpse has started to grow—a phenomenon accompanied by the myriad sprouting of poisonous mushrooms throughout the flat. Under this plague Madeleine grows more shrewish, Amédée more depressed. They quarrel over each stolen glimpse at the corpse. Or else Madeleine complains of the housework, her husband's sloth. Why can't Amédée pull himself together and finish that play he is supposed to be writing? Bitterly she goes to a telephone switchboard and begins her daily drudge as an operator. They pause for lunch.

Then they freeze—the postman has stopped by their door to call Amédée's name. A terrible five minutes ensue. They try to play dead. Then they protest in paranoid vigor that they have nothing to hide, that Amédée Buccinioni of Number 29 Generals Road cannot possibly be Amédée Buccinioni of Number 29 Generals Road. The postman accepts the denial and leaves them lonelier, more terrified than ever. Glass shatters in the corpse's room. The body is expanding in "geometric progression . . . the incurable disease of the dead." Fearful of what the neighbors may think, they bawl to the apartment house at large: "It was the p-o-stman! The p-o-stman!" They hear a violent banging against the wall of the corpse's room. The door gradually gives way, and amid a continuous crackling the corpse's enormous

feet glide on stage. Madeleine whimpers in despair as the curtain falls on Act I.

So far Ionesco has developed this strange corpse into an eloquent symbol, magnified by indirect presentation, of all the anxiety, guilt, and routine which make up the dead weight of the world. For Amédée and Madeleine, the corpse has become a chronic alibi, a vengeful terror, a jailer, a shameful fascination. In smaller ways, too, Ionesco is suggesting the paradoxes of despair. Madeleine, so dismayed by the postman's call, can still complain, once he is dismissed: "No one ever writes to us! Not a single soul!" Their accelerating wretchedness not only demeans them but on the other hand ennobles them. The virago Madeleine is capable of urging her husband to "break your rule. Have a glass of wine, go on, you look so miserable!" She tries heroically to answer the switchboard in the midst of her horror. Amédée, the timid, preserves a dogged kindness to his wife, and with unwarranted courage tries to assure her: "We've still got some food in reserve, Madeleine! Macaroni, mustard, vinegar, celery...." Farce and nightmare intertwine. From one viewpoint the postman's call is a slapstick skit about two eccentric recluses. Madeleine's patter at the switchboard is also a fine skit on the idea that one may juggle the affairs of the wide world without leaving one's private muddle. She manipulates the conversations of royalty; with calm omniscience she acts as information center ("No, Sir, there are no gas char' bers left, not since the last war.... You'd better wait for the next one"). But she shrieks at Amédée between phrases; and her oracles at the switchboard dovetail, in a comic pastiche, with Amédée's ordering of groceries at the window. Thus *Amédée* is presenting a simple but fertile theme, exposed to the various lights of terror, pathos, and humor.

As Act II opens, the stage is cluttered: Amédée and Madeleine have carried in furniture in order to clear the dead man's room; now the corpse's feet are advancing across the stage; and the mushrooms are growing gigantic. Amédée is deadly tired, barely able to rise now and then to chalk-mark the corpse's latest advance. Madeleine nags him. She blames him for the corpse (neither is at all sure how it first came there); she demands that he do something....

Then a curious duet begins, in a new mode, a tragic lyric which opens up their spiritual biography and illuminates the dead present. Amédée, in an exhausted rhythmic trance, invokes the past. In response, young Amédée appears on stage, calling his bride, young Madeleine, to join him in a joyous life:

AMÉDÉE II: Madeleine, wake up, let's pull the curtains, the spring is dawning.... Wake up.... the room is flooded with sunshine.... a glorious light.... a gentle warmth!....

MADELEINE II: . . . night and rain and mud! . . . oh, the cold! . . . I'm shivering . . . dark . . . dark . . . dark! . . . you're blind, you're gilding reality! Don't you see that you're *making it beautiful?*

The antiphony mounts slowly, Madeleine answering each song with a fearful cry:

AMÉDÉE II: . . . The green valley where the lilies bloom . . .

MADELEINE II: . . . Mushrooms! . . . mushrooms! . . . mushrooms! . . .

At last each hammers upon a single theme, their voices "*very shrill, . . . plaintive, inhuman, unreal, like the cry of animals in pain.*"

AMÉDÉE II: We love each other. We are happy. In a house of glass, a house of light . . .

MADELEINE II: He means a house of brass, brass . . .

AMÉDÉE II: House of glass, of light . . .

MADELEINE II: House of brass, house of night!

AMÉDÉE II: Of glass, of light, of glass, of light . . .

MADELEINE II: Of brass, of brass, of night, of brass, of night . . .

AMÉDÉE II: Of glass, glass, glass . . .

MADELEINE II: Brass, night, brass, night, brass, night . . . brass, brass, brass, brass . . .

AMÉDÉE II (*as though beaten*): Glass, light, glass, light . . . brass, light, brass, night, night, brass . . .

TOGETHER: Brass, night, brass, night, brass, night, brass, night . . .<sup>5</sup>

Madeleine's theme has conquered. Her fears of sex, insecurity, neighbors—of life itself—have in effect created this corpse which luxuriates in a fungus-infested flat.

When the duet ends, night falls rapidly; strange music and greenish light emanate from the dead man's room. With a gong-like sound the feet touch the opposite door. The time has come to get rid of the corpse, and to Amédée the moment is strangely tender: "Our home will seem quite empty when he's gone . . . He's been the silent witness of our whole past. . . ." Momentarily oblivious to his wife's increasing frenzy, Amédée pauses at the open window, surrounded by what Ionesco specifies as "the mingled presence of horror and beauty"—the luminous mushrooms, the dead man's radiance, the glowing sky:

Look, Madeleine . . . all the acacia trees are aglow. Their blossoms are bursting open and shooting up to the sky. The full-blown moon is flooding the Heavens with light, a *living* planet.

5. *Three Plays*, 46–52. In the French the climactic phrases for Amédée are "*maison de verre, de lumière,*" and for Madeleine, "*maison de fer, de nuit*" (*Théâtre*, I, 281).

The Milky Way is like creamy fire. Honeycombs, countless galaxies, comets' tails, celestial ribbons, rivers of molten silver, and brooks, lakes and oceans of palpable light . . . And space, space, infinite space!

On his wife's order, Amédée helps her to tug the gargantuan corpse out the window--a prolonged task which seems to tug also at the house and the characters themselves. Act II ends.

Act III, the finale of *Amédée*, is pure carnival. As Amédée drags the corpse into Little Torco Square, jazz and bar-noise sound from the cabaret, an enormous moon floats in the sky, stars and comets cascade overhead. A drunken American soldier shows Amédée how to make himself a human spool on which to wind up the flaccid corpse. Cops appear, to chase Amédée. In a crescendo of girls, soldiers, whistles, applause, Amédée takes to the air, borne aloft by the corpse now turned into a parachute-sail. Madeleine enters, trying to scold him back down. But Amédée makes his farewell speech: ". . . I wanted to take the weight of the world on my shoulders . . . I apologize, Ladies 'n Gentlemen, I apologize profusely." He vanishes into a heaven exploding with light. The crowd and Madeleine troop into the cabaret for drinks on the house. The play is over.<sup>6</sup>

Amédée has won back to the vision of "gravity abolished . . . world without weight" which he had dreamed of when he first loved Madeleine. Before this affirmation of joyous life, no corpse can have substance; even a cadaver may bear one heavenward. Amédée is a playwright, too, as if Ionesco were to say that the way of life is the way of drama. The theater must renounce its arrogance in trying to bear the weight of the world. New sociologies, psychologies, progress itself—all are idols beside the beautiful terrors and miracles of life.

Ionesco may seem deficient as a critic of life because in play after play he devaluates the intellect, travesties it, denies it to his characters as a resource by which they can learn what is happening. The simple acceptance of life is his theme, an acceptance unstiffened (or as he might say, uncoagulated) by a reasoned appreciation. Such an affirmation is neither the greatest nor the least achievement of human faith. Beside the fierce vigor of Kierkegaard's leap from logic into life, Ionesco's affirmation seems mild. It lacks the assertive thunder of Carlyle and Thoreau, the luminous intelligence of Emerson, the ardent flow of Whitman. But Ionesco has found his work in a gloomier world deprived of confidence in first truths: a world in which every man at some time or other if not always is reduced to hearing only the universal murmur of private desires, agonies, and contra-

6. Ionesco has written a variant finale to eliminate the change of setting in Act III; the resolution is the same.

dictions.<sup>7</sup> Ionesco has chosen to speak that language freshly, however darkly. His freshness is undeniable. There is a gusto in the savage discords of *The Bald Soprano*, a horrid loveliness in the animalism by which the characters of *Rhinoceros* are swallowed up, a poignant fury in Bérenger's struggle to confront the Killer. If Ionesco has a special though limited power as a poet in the prophetic sense, it is that he can reawaken in modern man the candid child who treasures life simply because he is alive.

## 4

Whatever the ultimate claim for Ionesco as a seer, I think his greatest immediate stimulus is technical. Here he points to great possibilities and serious dangers.

Ionesco's fluid, miraculous spectacles, his effects with nonreferential language, his systematic exploitation of the irrational, his enactments of metaphor, his plastic staging of character, and his calculated subduing of plot—all these have wide application far beyond Ionesco's own humanistic concerns. They offer theatrical expression to any of a dozen contemporary perspectives which see man comically or tragically as split, dissipated, isolated, skewed. Beyond that, Ionesco with the body of his devices stands boldly for experiment itself:

Everything is permitted in the theatre: to incarnate characters, but also to materialize anguish, inner presences. It is therefore not only permitted, but it is recommended, to make props act, and objects live, to breathe life into the settings, to make the symbols concrete.<sup>8</sup>

A passionate artificiality is the keynote: a theatrical presentation blatantly, tremendously make-believe (for that is the truth of the stage) but inspired by "man's need of eternity" (that being the truth of life). If one hesitates to imagine what further artifice is possible in certain directions, Ionesco's example suggests that the very moment of hesitation is the time for the true explorer to plunge forward. Why shouldn't a given "character" jump like a spark from one actor to another? Perhaps all actors should be identical in external appearance, thus allowing everything to histrionic skill? And so on.

Of course innovation itself is one of the lesser talents and one of the most treacherous as well. A crusading practitioner like Ionesco may ride his own theories too hard before they have been tempered. A crucial example is Ionesco's reliance upon random elements. Donald Watson, one of his translators, reports:

7. "Le théâtre est, pour moi, la projection sur scène du monde du dedans: c'est dans mes rêves, dans mes angoisses, dans mes désirs obscurs, dans mes contradictions intérieures que, pour ma part, je me réserve le droit de prendre cette matière théâtrale" (spoken by the character Ionesco in *L'impromptu de l'Alma*, *Théâtre*, II, 57).

8. "Discovering the Theatre," trans. Leonard C. Pronko, *Tulane Drama Review*, IV (Sept., 1959), 13.

I remember asking Ionesco once what was the point of one or two special puzzling remarks in *Jacques*. "None at all," he said, "that is the point. Put anything you like." But the trouble is "anything" does not always have the same effect.<sup>9</sup>

This anecdote is amply supported in the texts of the plays by Ionesco's frequent tentativeness of direction. For example, at one point in *The Bald Soprano* "the clock strikes as much as it likes." The alternate finale to *Amédée* contains so much variation in dialogue and comic business that Ionesco seems to have felt that his play could have been written in any number of ways.

Ionesco's predilection for the random touch is closely related to his deep distrust of the thesis play:

I attempt only to create a primitive theatre with images, colors, voices, movement and gestures, pieces of wood and painted planks—and words also (sometimes not enough, sometimes too many) that mean nothing, at least not in a clear way, aside from their integration in the scenic development. I detest the reasoning play, constructed like a syllogism, of which the last scenes constitute the logical conclusion of the introductory scenes, considered as premises.<sup>10</sup>

Elsewhere he writes that his own plays have originated

from a state of soul, not from an ideology, from an impulse and not a program; the cohesion that gives a structure to emotions in their pure state corresponds to an inner necessity, and not to a logic of construction imposed from the outside.<sup>11</sup>

The important oppositions here are soul versus reason, inner necessity versus logic of construction. Ionesco in effect condemns not only propaganda but artistic idea. He sees artistic design itself as a symptom of dead, didactic drama. True art must be intuitive, unplanned, improvisatory:

I have no ideas before I write a play. I have them after I have written a play, or when I am not writing at all. I believe that artistic creation is spontaneous.<sup>12</sup>

Hence, despite his technical ingenuity, Ionesco has refused to be committed, on the small scale, to precision of detail, or, on the large scale, to a demonstrable coherence of structure.

Two difficulties arise. First, an author cannot be truly random, since he does end up with one certain detail and not another. This detail will have its effect; but the author in declining to consider his

9. "Retrospect," *Three Plays* [p. iv].

10. "Theater and Anti-Theater," trans. Leonard C. Pronko, *Theatre Arts*, XLII (June, 1958), 77.

11. "The Point of Departure," trans. Leonard C. Pronko, *Theatre Arts*, XLII (June, 1958), 18.

12. "Discovering the Theatre," 16.

choice is declining to ask what effect will be produced. He is for the time relinquishing control over his audience. Ionesco might have distinguished between the *random* detail, which does not exist, and the *opaque* detail, carefully chosen for effects of bewilderment, frustration, and so on; but he does not.

Second, by declining unity of design, a dramatist does away with any sure principle telling him when to stop or how long to keep going. Ionesco's plays—especially his earlier ones—do show an uncertainty of scale. *The Lesson* does drag out. Parts of *The Bald Soprano* become tedious. Moreover, by ignoring what he has already done in a play, Ionesco is likely to abandon an intense effect and thrust a new conception upon an unready audience. The psychological odyssey of Choubert, which gives such concentration to *Victims of Duty*, is forgotten in the last few minutes, in favor of the bread-chewing parable. Since evanescence of dramatic issue has not been established as one of the probabilities of this particular play, the final episode fails to give direction to the emotional momentum already created in the spectator.

The more one hears the excited discussion of the virtues of artistic "disunity" or "open form," the more one suspects that criticism is being deceived by misleading metaphors. The serious modern writers, as Ionesco himself has stated, are trying "to rediscover the timeless truth and to reintegrate it with what is of our time."<sup>13</sup> Since "our time" seems unusually self-conscious and troubled, these writers are necessarily trying for more complex effects. They are especially interested in conveying paradoxes and dilemmas. The world vision which animates their creations is often fragmented. None the less if they are artists they have attained a precise apprehension of their subject, and this apprehension is their unity; however mystically it comes to the writer, however puzzling and disturbing the product will be, this apprehension must govern, and afterwards be seen to govern, the whole execution of the artwork.

Ionesco's latest plays have this integrity of execution to a higher degree than one might expect from the author's essays on himself. To my mind *The Killer* and *Rhinoceros* are each distinguished by the radiating intensity of a closely-worked idea. If this is so, they argue that Eugène Ionesco, as sensitive observer and as technical virtuoso, has everything to gain by recognizing and refining his own logic of construction.

13. "There Is No Avant-garde Theater," trans. Richard Howard, *Evergreen Review*, I, No. 4 (1957), 104.

## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Ionesco's plays in their original French have been published by Librairie Gallimard, Paris, as follows:

*Théâtre*, Vol. I (1954), containing *la Cantatrice chauve*, *la Leçon*, *Jacques ou la soumission*, *les Chaises*, *Victimes du devoir*, and *Amédée ou comment s'en débarrasser*.

*Théâtre*, Vol. II (1958), containing *l'Impromtu de l'Alma ou le caméléon du berger*, *Tueur sans gages*, *le Nouveau locataire*, *l'Avenir est dans les oeufs*, *le Maître*, and *la Jeune fille à marier*. *le Rhinocéros* (1959).

Other short plays, such as *Pièce à 4*, have appeared in the *Cahiers du Collège de 'Pataphysique*.

The Grove Press translations are as follows:

*Four Plays*, translated by Donald M. Allen (1958), containing *The Bald Soprano*, *The Lesson*, *Jack*, and *The Chairs*.

*Three Plays*, translated by Donald Watson (1958), containing *Amédée*, *The New Tenant*, and *Victims of Duty*.

*The Killer and Other Plays*, translated by Donald Watson (1960), containing *The Killer*, *Improvisation or the Shepherd's Chameleon*, and *Maid to Marry*.

*Rhinoceros*, translated by Derek Prouse (1960), containing *Rhinoceros*, *The Leader*, and *The Future Is in Eggs* (a sequel to *Jack*).

*Foursome*, translated by Donald M. Allen, *Evergreen Review*, Vol. 4, No. 13, 1960.

The chief collection of French criticism of Ionesco is *Cahiers des saisons*, No. 15 (Winter, 1959). This "Ionesco issue" also includes biographical data, as well as three pieces by Ionesco himself.

The chief Ionesco essays accessible in English are as follows:

"There Is No Avant-Garde Theater," translated by Richard Howard, *Evergreen Review*, Vol. I, No. 4, 1957.

"The Point of Departure" and

"Theatre and Anti-Theatre," translated by Leonard C. Pronko, *Theatre Arts*, June, 1958.

"Discovering the Theatre," translated by Leonard C. Pronko, *Tulane Drama Review*, September, 1959.

"The Tragedy of Language," translated by Jack Undank, *Tulane Drama Review*, March, 1960.

"My Thanks to the Critics," translated by Leo Kerz, *Theatre Arts*, October, 1960.

Ionesco has written fantasy short stories, of which four have been used as germs for his plays, as indicated: *Oriflamme* (*Amédée*), *une Victime du devoir* (*Victimes du devoir*), *la Photo du colonel* (*Tueur*)

sans gages), and *le Rhinocéros*. The following three are available in English:

"The Photograph of the Colonel," *Evergreen Review*, Vol. I, No. 3, 1957.

"Flying High" ("Oriflamme"), *Mademoiselle*, October, 1957; reprinted in *The Year's Greatest Science-Fiction and Fantasy* (3rd Annual Volume; Dell, 1958).

"The Rhinoceros," *Mademoiselle*, March, 1960.

I do not know of any extended biographical essay. Short, undocumented sketches may be found as follows:

Headnote to *The Bald Soprano*, a shortened translation by Donald Allen, *New World Writing*, Ninth Mentor Selection (1956), p. 198.

Muriel Reed, "Ionesco," *Réalités*, No. 85 (English edition: December, 1957), pp. 44-51.

Inside covers, *Cahiers des saisons*, No. 15 (Winter, 1959).

"The Talk of the Town," *New Yorker*, December 10, 1960, pp. 46-47.

Nan Robertson, "Ionesco: Indebted to Kafka and Marx Brothers," drama section, *New York Times*, January 8, 1961.

RICHARD M. EASTMAN

## A NOTE ON PERCEPTION AND COMMUNICATION IN BECKETT'S *ENDGAME*

INTRODUCING HIS STUDY of Samuel Beckett's *Endgame*, Richard M. Eastman comments: "Beckett belongs with such authors as Proust and Kafka for whom the deadly isolation of individuality precludes communication in terms of conventional surface."<sup>1</sup> Having made this general classification of Beckett, Mr. Eastman offers an admirably circumspect analysis of *Endgame* itself, demonstrating that Beckett's theme of isolation is emphasized by the work's ultimate incomprehensibility as a unit. And certainly the critic is to be commended for resisting all temptations to restrict the play to any one frame of meaning—not Bonamy Dobrée's interpretation of it as a morality play, not even his own discovery that "the play has many features of a chess game in its last phase." Yet, without attempting to erect the meaning or "key" to *Endgame*, we may see that, on at least one important plane, it is specifically concerned with how man's attempts at perception and communication relate to his assurance of individual existence. Its emphatic pronouncement is that whereas "individuality precludes communication in terms of conventional surface" it is only in terms of conventional surface that communication takes place; and thus individuality, contingent upon communication, is dissolved.

Beckett portrays the self divided into two persons. The first (Clov) is a busy servant, a workman, whose vitality is the continual fulfilling of patterns which an outer voice of authority imposes upon him. Other than the fact that the voice is there, and his movement (his life) exists only insofar as he obeys the voice, he sees no reason for obeying it, nor any definite end to be achieved. Indeed, it is manifest that his obedient performing serves no end at all (he is ordered to move an object from point A to point B, and later to move the same object back again—and so on, ad infinitum); and, therefore, since his identity could only be proven by his being agent to some end, he possibly does not exist. The second person (Hamm) is the authoritarian master whose voice the servant responds to. This master's existence is defined solely by his tiresome game—which he knows a pretense—of repeating trite combinations, patterns, and having them fulfilled by the serv-

1. Richard M. Eastman, "The Strategy of Samuel Beckett's *Endgame*," *Modern Drama*, II (May, 1959), 36.

ant; thus the actions he imposes become a mere play (one of a well-known repertoire), all style and technique—and no content. The master is blind, paralyzed from the waist down, and unable to leave his chair. Without vision all he can do is call out the patterns from memory and then wait eagerly to see if the servant, catching up the master's pretense, will put them into play. One of the chief games the master imposes upon the servant is that of perception; he sends him to look out the window to find, with his relatively good eyes, what exists outside. Invariably, the servant reports that there is grayness outside; though at times, as if to tweak his master's desires for variation in the pattern, he says he sees in the grayness certain objects, perhaps a moving person, for example. But even the elation the master receives from this information is pretense, for the master knows that the servant is playing, perhaps consciously, the game of imposing a subjective illusion upon the outward reality of nothingness.

Within Beckett's dual self there is the conflict of self-destruction. Each "person" longs to kill, or at least quiet, the other, even though each realizes such an event would mean mutual dissolution. The servant, tired and embittered from his ceaseless performances, longs to remove the authority which causes all his fruitless pain; yet every time the homicidal impulse arises he subdues it, conscious that, without the patterns and their imposing authority, he would cease to be. More powerful is the blind master's impulse to destroy the servant; for that impulse results from the master's honest vision of what man's role is *vis-à-vis* reality. Knowing that he too exists only in terms of his partner, he still cannot resist the temptation to prophesy a truth which, if grasped by that partner, would destroy the man's illusion of a personal existence gained through unquestioned activity—and which thus would end the both of them. Hamm tells Clov that there is no perception, and, *ergo*, no personal existence:

One day you'll be blind, like me. You'll be sitting there, a speck in the void, in the dark, for ever, like me. . . . You'll look at the wall a while, then you'll say, I'll close my eyes, perhaps have a little sleep, after that I'll feel better, and you'll close them. And when you open them again there'll be no wall any more. Infinite emptiness will be all around you, all the resurrected dead of all the ages wouldn't fill it, and there you'll be like a little bit of grit in the middle of the steppe.

Thus by the end of the play Clov has been goaded into sophistication. Accepting Hamm's speculation that a boy (a "potential procreator") seen on the horizon through the telescope is probably a subjective illusion, and thus agreeing that he can't even perform the self-affirming action of killing this boy, Clov submits to Hamm's request to speak "something from your heart." He tells the story of how it used to be

when he as quixotic idealist thrashed about relying upon a structure of absolutes, and how it is now that all absolutes, even the concepts of "sleeping" and "waking," are gone, and no denotation—no verb of perceiving and hence no subject for the verb—remains.

They said to me, That's love, yes, yes, not a doubt, now you see how—. . . How easy it is. They said to me, That's friendship, yes, yes, no question, you've found it. They said to me, Here's the place, stop, raise your head and look at all that beauty. That order! They said to me, Come now, you're not a brute beast, think upon these things and you'll see how all becomes clear. And simple! They said to me, What skilled attention they get, all these dying of their wounds. . . . I say to myself—sometimes, Clov, you must learn to suffer better than that if you want them to weary of punishing you—one day. I say to myself—sometimes, Clov, you must be there better than that if you want them to let you go—one day. But I feel too old, and too far, to form new habits. Good, it'll never end, I'll never go. . . . Then one day, suddenly, it ends, it changes, I don't understand, it dies, or it's me, I don't understand that either. I ask the words that remain—sleeping, waking, morning, evening. They have nothing to say. . . . I open the door of the cell and go. I am so bowed I only see my feet, if I open my eyes, and between my legs a little trail of black dust. I say to myself that the earth is extinguished, though I never saw it lit.

With that speech, the servant—as if the imprisoning ogre's long spell has been broken by magical pronouncement—is free to leave his master. But when he does so the partnership is split, each half now functionless, dissolving. The game of perception ceases as each partner—in admitting the truth about existence—performs the only individual action open to him: self- (and therefore mutual) annihilation. Clov is clove indeed, cut off by the knowledge received from the cold master upon whom he depended for his job, his roles to perform. And Hamm is cut off in turn, left without any bodily form to serve his directions, himself destroyed by his destructive sophisticating of Clov.

It would be simple to conclude that Clove is id-Ego and Hamm is Ego-superego, with "whole being" dependent upon their union. But it is more accurate to emphasize the pattern of interaction between them: the dialogue in which each becomes subject and object for the other. For Beckett leaves the possibilities of symbolization sufficiently open so that Clov and Hamm may also represent individual persons desperate to communicate with—to act upon—each other thus to prove their subjective existences. The process of perception by which man asserts—or, as Beckett seems to insist, fails to assert—his individuality is the same within selves as it is between selves; and it would be presumptuous for the viewer of the play to classify this appearance of interdependent entities as exclusively intro- or extro-spection.

ALLAN BRICK

## THE NEW OPEN-AIR DRAMA IN FRANCE: REDISCOVERY AND RENASCENCE

IN 1924, Jacques Copeau, seeking new ways to repurify the drama in France, was weary of plays performed in confined theaters before limited strata of spectators. He asked a close associate, Léon Chancerel, to rediscover "the beautiful sites of France, places of architectural nobility totally impregnated with a long history offering to the imagination and skill of a dramatic creator the opportunity for renewal and aeration, as well as a way to meet and commune in seasonal dramatic celebrations—exactly as in ancient Greece and in the medieval epoch." In such noble sites, Copeau told his friend, it was possible to rebuild "the true, authentic theater of the people."

Copeau, followed by his disciple Chancerel, initiated a widespread renascence of open-air dramatic performances in France. With "Les Copiaux" and other small troupes, they roamed throughout Burgundy and other French provinces, often playing before handfuls of spectators in tiny village squares or even in fields, not unlike medieval *jongleurs*. Although Copeau's dreams of re-educating a lower-class public to love the theater were doomed to be shattered, his heroic endeavor has not been fruitless. By 1960, the number and quality of outdoor dramatic performances in France had advanced in prodigious leaps. Between mid-May and early September, 1960, more than fifty-five Summer Festivals of Drama were presented in almost every part of France.

It is no coincidence, of course, that the most remarkable contemporary exponent of "drama under the stars" aesthetics, Jean Vilar, received his artistic heritage from Charles Dullin, one of Copeau's most faithful students. When Vilar and his Théâtre National Populaire astounded the skeptics (and even themselves) by the brilliant success of their first outdoor Festival of Drama at Avignon in 1947, a great impulse was given to other experimental directors and their hopes for open-air theater as a source of fresh approaches to drama. Vilar and the T.N.P. proved, among other things, that an exceedingly diverse and multitudinous audience could be attracted by drama more serious than insipid operettas and boudoir comedies, the traditional fare of touring provincial companies in France. The public at Avignon has been an extraordinary composite of spectators from almost every conceivable social level—a heterogeneity indicating a virtual revolution in the sociological patterns of French theater-going.

The T.N.P. has pursued Copeau's ideals in performing at historic sites of architectural nobility, at Avignon, in Marseille and the cities of Provence, and in a large number of outdoor locations throughout the French provinces. A T.N.P. presentation of Molière's *Dom Juan* at the lovely Château de Beaumesnil in 1954 inspired Robert Kemp, late dean of French drama critics, to one of the most beautiful descriptions ever penned in recollection of the unworldly transfiguration of play, performers and audience under the spell of drama in the open air:

The cool evening became slowly enveloped in fog; it rose from the moats, and swans fell asleep in woolly cotton. But gusts of breeze also came from forests and humid meadows. Wispy clouds rolled in between the chateau and amphitheater, with its two thousand seats. Projectors flashed silver beams. The chateau's façade was turning pale, the rose-colored bricks were now flesh-pink, contours were melting, taking on iridescent hues . . . Beaumesnil became unreal. It bathed in mists worthy of Turner. It looked so light that we would not have been surprised to see it rise up into the sky, an Arabian Nights sky. Even the actors' words were padded. Whence came this Commander, more of vapor than marble? *Dom Juan* is one of the most robust and trenchant of plays; rather than a Turner, it is a French Velasquez, a Zurburan . . . But this gruff drama also has its feints, its enigmas, its veils of caution . . . And the association of the ringing text and these clouds of mist riding along in front of us, contorted like Hell's smoky fumes, was overwhelming. A creation of men and Chance. Improbable, unforeseeable coincidence. Beneath a sky of scintillating stars, *Dom Juan* would have had another sort of beauty. That imparted to it by the mist of Beaumesnil was a delight which will not fade from our memories.

As Robert Kemp so poetically concluded, magical effects of transfiguration are among the surprising artistic revelations created by Nature's quirks in man-made settings for theatrical performance. Drama under the stars constructs an aesthetics all its own. The sensual reality of open air, perceptible stirrings of wind, earth, and trees, the hinted caresses or admonitions of Nature's sentinels guarding against man's Promethean attempts to resolve in plastic and verbal rites the enigmas of his destiny—these elements indeed form an ambience propitious for drama in its fullest and most meaningful dimensions.

Enclosed playhouses, of course, have other artistic advantages. The delicate physical and facial expressiveness required in small indoor theaters is much more difficult to convey in outdoor arenas. This is also true of vocal shadings. Recent open-air drama in France has sometimes achieved marvelous subtleties of theatrical atmosphere by skillful fusions of light and sound. When Jean Vilar and the T.N.P. presented *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Avignon in 1959 and the

following winter in Paris, pale-green and pastel-shaded lighting constituted almost the entire visual imagery evoking Athenian forests. Although many critics disagreed, a large portion of the public was captivated by the interpretation of Shakespeare's comedy, ordinarily deemed "unplayable" by the high priests of French theatrical taste.

The more venturesome directors of French drama festivals have clearly shown that open-air styles of staging can be fitted to an unexpectedly wide gamut of plays. Disregarding traditionalist prejudices and prognostications, outdoor performances of supposed "salon-theater" works like *Tartuffe*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *Hamlet*, Camus' *Caligula*, and even Marivaux's drawing-room comedies such as *La Fée se Suivante* have met success in recent French production during summer festivals.

What were the most significant new trends discernible in 1960 during the French summer festivals of drama? The directors' ingenuity in choosing open-air backgrounds and décor was a remarkable presage of the theater's future directions in France. Among the various kinds of locations used in summer staging were courtyards of palaces and chateaux, village squares, a convent cloister, Roman arenas and amphitheaters, makeshift grandstands in marketplaces, a craggy island, cathedral squares, public gardens, basilicas, medieval fortresses, and town-hall courtyards. Most importantly, these summer presentations of drama touched the minds of citizens in every French social segment, from stevedore to industrialist, and were available in practically all geographical sectors of the country, from Flanders to Provence and from the Alps to Brittany. Something like a genuinely national rediscovery of theatrical fervor is gradually evolving in France, inspired in large degree by the new liberation of scenic styles and the fresh interpretations of outstanding plays given by the outdoor festivals.

In 1960, one of the strangest and most courageous French staging experiments of the summer took place at the former Roman village (once called "Clusius") where now stand the remains of a medieval fortress. Cluis, the modern village, is situated a few miles south of Châteauroux in west-central France. A bold director, Michel Philippe, decided to represent Victor Hugo's *Quatre-vingt-treize* in open-air, dramatic adaptation at the fortress ruins. He needed a cast of hundreds. Appealing for help, he alerted the entire populace in the vicinity of Cluis. The mayor of a nearby town, enthusiastic, helped with publicity and himself played a minor role. An extraordinary group of amateur actors, stagehands, technicians, and seamstresses was collected, peasants in large majority. The performance of Hugo's epic, in this isolated but grandiose outdoor site, attracted more than one thousand spectators. A relatively vast district, previously disunified,

became imbued with the cohesive spirit of theatrical creation. Plans for new presentations each summer are under way.

Theater festivals honoring the memories of great French playwrights increased in number and favor. The seventh Giraudoux Festival of summer drama at Bellac, the author's native city, again featured open-air performances in the Hotel de Ville courtyard. Three whimsies by Giraudoux, seldom staged abroad, were given: *L'Apollon de Bellac*, *Le Supplément au Voyage de Cook*, and *L'Impromptu Limousin*. Molière's *Tartuffe*, concerts, and ballets completed the program.

At Sète, near the "cemetery by the sea" celebrated by Valéry's poem, in that magnificent panorama of the Mediterranean shimmering beside a rocky shore and pine forests, a special "Festival of Sète" was arranged to commemorate Valéry as dramatist. The poet's admirers built an "under-the-stars" amphitheater on the cliff overlooking the sea, only a short distance from Valéry's beloved cemetery. Here several of the poet's little-known plays were performed. In an idyllic synthesis of quickening air, the gentle sounds of waves lapping in the sand, wide horizons of sea and sky, and breezes rustling through pine thickets, actors and public experienced an unforgettable association of life and art. Valéry's harmony of mind and Nature was reality for hundreds of spectators, as his plays in performance eclipsed the ideas of past, present, or future.

Guy Suarès, a noteworthy young opponent of snobbish "vanguard" drama, continued to champion theatrical rediscovery with a paradoxical "Festival Paul Claudel" at this playwright's favorite country retreat, the secluded Château de Brangues in the Isère foothills. Rather than Claudelian drama, Suarès and his small troupe staged three short plays by Chekhov, *The Brute*, *A Marriage Proposal*, and *The Harmfulness of Tobacco*. Justifying his choices, Suarès explained that in an isolated region of France where the scenic art was nearly unknown, he hoped to renew the desire for "a theater of the people" with dramas less forbidding than Claudel's lofty creations.

"Le Théâtre au Village," a group of youthful actors sponsored by Jean Cocteau, undertook the improbable adventure of performing classical French plays in small village squares throughout the wild country of the Vaucluse and the Basses-Alpes. Traveling in a decrepit bus, this hardy company gave more than twenty performances of dramas like Molière's *L'Avare* and Racine's *Les Plaideurs*, often before audiences largely unacquainted with serious drama in any form.

A rocky island, Bendor, lying off Bandol and Sanary on the Mediterranean coast east of Marseille, was again the successful site for a well-established summer drama festival, "The Nights of Bendor." La Comédie de Provence, a veteran regional troupe, offered Shakespeare's

*The Taming of the Shrew* in French adaptation in an open-air arena carved amidst the island's boulders. This comedy, an especial favorite of French summer-theater producers, was also featured at the festival in the Roman theater of Autun and in several other outdoor presentations in France.

"The Nights of Burgundy," small-town performances of drama, music, puppetry, and dance inspired by Jacques Copeau's Burgundian tours during the 1920's and 1930's, once more offered an unusual diversity of plays. In the Dijon vicinity, spectators witnessed Molière's *Tartuffe* (in the open-air Cour de Bar), *Hamlet*, *La Veuve rusée* (adapted from Goldoni), Marivaux's *La Fausse Suivante*, Adamov's *Les Ames mortes* (via Gogol), and a voodoo show staged by a troupe from Haiti.

Drama under the stars was also available in Paris. In the Tuileries Gardens, next to fountains, flowerbeds, and carousels, a young company of actors led by Georges Peyrou and France Daubrey set up an outdoor theater equipped with an emergency covering in the event of rain. Performing almost the entire summer, this troupe presented a remarkably lively and original *Much Ado about Nothing* in French version, alternating with classical comedies by Molière. Despite rainy, cool weather, the comedians' ardor was undampened. Even blasé Parisian critics admitted that the productions were novel and stimulating.

The summer of 1960 found the oldest and largest French drama festivals (Orange, Lyon, Angers, Carcassonne, Avignon, Vaison-la-Romaine, Sarlat, Arras) bubbling with new theatrical creations and experiments. Most debated, perhaps, was the feat of Roger Planchon with his Théâtre de la Cité de Villeurbanne troupe at the Festival of Orange. Planchon, a brilliant young director deeply influenced by Brecht and Vilar, carried his astonishingly original views of staging to a weird apogée in his presentation of Marlowe's *Edward II* (freely adapted by Adamov). The *mise-en-scène* conceived by Planchon was dominated by vast, revolving arabesques in both individual and mass movements. His actors seemed almost constantly in motion, often releasing wild torrents of words while changing position. Marlowe's play, excessively long and diffuse, provoked violent pro-and-con reactions. Its Elizabethan intrigues appeared out of place and unnatural in the majestic background of the first-century-A.D. Roman wall and amphitheater at Orange.

Before the sublime façade of the Palais des Papes at Avignon, Jean Vilar and his T.N.P. pursued their belief in the revivifying qualities of open-air drama. Their most discussed summer creation, Sophocles' *Antigone*, dismayed critics but won popular plaudits. Catherine Sellers,

who played Antigone, disappointed enthusiasts who had somewhat prematurely foreseen her ascendancy to the rank of a French theatrical "divinity" comparable to Sarah Bernhardt or Ludmilla Pitoëff. Critics notwithstanding, the T.N.P. bravely persists in exploring the risky frontiers of problematical dramas and styles. Strindberg's *Erik XIV* and Brecht's *Mother Courage* were the other summer productions at Avignon.

A veteran but relatively unsung hero of open-air theater in France, Jean Dasté, again trekked with his regional troupe, La Comédie de St.-Etienne, throughout eastern France between Annecy and Clermont-Ferrand, Grenoble and Valence. Dasté's actors usually split into small groups, giving plays in small cities and villages in all sorts of theaters, indoors and outdoors. The St.-Etienne company, more intimately involved with the working class than any other large professional troupe in France, journeyed from town to town presenting "Festivals in Public Squares."

One of the most picturesque summer festivals of drama in France took place at Sarlat, in the delightful Dordogne valley, land of truffles and prehistoric cave-drawings. Maurice Sarrazin and his regional company, Le Grenier de Toulouse, performed in the ninth festival entitled "Jeux du Théâtre de Sarlat et la Dordogne." The presentations were Brecht's *Mère Courage et ses Enfants*, *Le Mariage de Figaro* by Beaumarchais, and a twin-bill uniting Lorca's *La Savetièrre prodigieuse* and Cervantes' *Le Rétable des Merveilles*. Sarlat, at night, recaptured its ancestral, fairyland atmosphere. Medieval façades of churches and houses, entrancing balconies with forged-iron balustrades were subtly enhanced by artistic lighting. A rather small medieval square, surrounded by arcaded corridors, ancient towers and belfreys, overflowed with spectators, many remaining outside the fences ringing temporary grandstands. The tiny stage, sharply inclined toward the front, looked like a miniature, toy platform. Behind it rose a steep, curving street and charming old houses. The actors descended the narrow street, singing or gossiping as they approached the stage. Sarlat, during these fanciful evenings of outdoor theater, buzzed with excitement. One felt that for a few nights, the little town's collective soul had become transformed by the enchantment of theatrical creativity.

At Sarlat, Spanish Golden-Age drama was vibrantly believable. The open-air arena's medieval surroundings, historically evocative, formed an ideal frame for Cervantes' comic world. His ludicrous human puppets in *Le Rétable des Merveilles* took life, strutted their antics, mimed the human comedy. Yet this same play, if performed on an enclosed, Italian-style stage in Paris, would probably have appeared grotesque, even pointless.

Sarlat, Cluis, Sète, Avignon, Orange, Dijon, Bellac, and the Paris Tuilleries were but a very few examples of the burgeoning open-air renascence of theatrical experimentation evidenced in French summer theaters. Almost every province, even the most isolated, organized at least one drama festival. In the Hautes-Alpes, for instance, the town of Tallard sponsored open-air theatrical performances at the height of the mountaineering season. Northern France, where the primary impetus originated in the remarkable productions by André Reybaz and Catherine Toth at the annual Festival of Arras, has slowly begun to welcome outdoor summer drama. In 1960, Guingamp, a small city of the Côtes-du-Nord area, gave a three-day theater festival.

Not the least of the artistic satisfactions derived from recent French drama in the outdoors has been the opportunity to see many plays seldom or never performed in ordinary Parisian or provincial theaters. *Barrabas*, Ghelderode's long, two-part historical pageant, was the substantial *pièce de résistance* offered by the 1960 festival at Provins. In the superb Roman amphitheater at Lyon-Fourvière, Shaw's *Androcles and the Lion* (rarely seen in France) was staged in *avant-première* by the Théâtre de France players under the guidance of Jean-Louis Barrault and Madeleine Renaud.

Among the most novel productions was a French version of de Rojas' *La Celestina*, directed by Georges Brousse at the Festival of Montauban. The twenty-two-act play required two nights to perform. Maria Meriko won acclaim for her pungent interpretation of the Celestina role. At Orange, the Théâtre de la Cité de Villeurbanne presented Shakespeare's *Henry IV*. One of the few festivals to specialize in comedy, Vaison-la-Romaine staged Marcel Achard's *Voulez-vous jouer avec mod* and a melodramatic adaptation of the apocryphal Elizabethan play, *Arden of Faversham*. Most observers felt that choice of the latter drama was a mistake, since Anglo-Saxon skulduggery appeared out of place in the ancient Roman theater of Vaison, featured by delicate cypress trees and starry Vaucluse skies.

During the ninth Festival of Angers, immense, high terraces and long stone stairways in the Courtyard of Honor at the Château du Roi René proved a majestic background for *Coriolanus*, stirringly incarnated by Paul Meurisse, one of France's most convincing tragic actors. *Coriolanus* epitomizes the sort of drama exceedingly difficult to present indoors but ideal for open-air staging. The Angers series also included a fresh interpretation of Molière's farcical *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac* and a flamboyant performance by Robert Hirsch, possibly the best young French comic actor, in *Le Comte de Monte-Cristo*. Daudet's drama, *L'Arlésienne*, was paired with *The Merry Wives of Windsor* at the Festival of Blois.

Witnessing extraordinary plays, experimental interpretations and novel staging effects presented in backgrounds of monumental glory—these are the delights of summer "drama under the stars" in France. In scenes of architectural nobility of the kind Copeau longed to utilize, the spectator has the thrilling sense of reinterpreting human history through theatrical communion. Man's handiwork weds Nature's creative genius. Art has few moments as inspiring as this.

Theatrical rediscovery and rebirth, rather than revelation of new plays, marked the summer of 1960 in French open-air drama. Rebellious experimentation in acting and staging styles was widespread, nevertheless. Sparked by the artistic flame of *animateurs* like Vilar, Planchon, Reybaz, Sarrazin, and Dasté, young directors such as Michel Philippe, Guy Suarès, and Georges Peyrou personify the new generation's evolving talents in fresh perception of well-known dramas, imaginative use of extraordinary sources and scenic backgrounds for outdoor performance, and vital re-evaluation of the theater's powers, techniques, and meanings. It seems certain that future playwrights will refashion their concepts of the drama's functions. Open-air performances in France, as elsewhere, have already upset many of our twentieth-century prejudices for drama compressed within rigid limits of time, physical area, textual patterns, and theatrical situations. Surprising horizons have been opened by French theaters in the out-of-doors. Will a vast renascence of popular enthusiasm for the drama soon be evident? If some outstanding playwrights emerge, can a new "Golden Age of the Theater" become possible? These questions are no longer in the dim realm of fantastic conjecture. The next few years may well give us answers.

KENNETH S. WHITE

# TRANSLATION AND ADAPTATION IN THE CONTEMPORARY DRAMA<sup>1</sup>

GENERAL RULES for the translation of literary works have to be so general that their usefulness becomes questionable. The literary genre, the time of writing, the relationship of the languages involved, and other factors provide too many variables. It is possible, however, to set standards for groups of works which are sufficiently homogeneous in kind or purpose to permit reasonably specific definitions.

The contemporary drama of Western culture constitutes such a group. The importance of its transfer from one language to another needs no discussion. But apart from its importance it also presents interesting and complex problems, for in the drama, more so than in any other literary form, prominent consideration has to be given to matters not connected with the verbal transfer of the work from one language to another. The reason for the presence of these extra-linguistic components is that the drama is a communal experience which transcends the realm of written material.

Like Granville-Barker in his essay on translation, "I speak of plays written for the theatre and translated for use in the theatre,"<sup>2</sup> and in the case of the contemporary drama this is undoubtedly a correct point of departure. For the drama of another, earlier period, for a play of recognized stature as a classic, the translator may view his task somewhat differently. But the drama of one's own time is written for the stage—otherwise it is not really drama—and must therefore be translated with the stage in mind, even if it is also to be presented to readers in book form. If it is not translated with the stage in mind, then the translator embarks on his task in violation of the author's intention—which would be an unpromising beginning.

It is important therefore for the translator to remember that a play is a communal experience. His intended end result is not merely a written work, but a work whose full impact depends first on the community on stage and behind it—actors, director, designer, etc.—and second on the community in front of that stage—the audience. The purpose of a translation is to make it possible for the first community to present the play to the second. A play therefore needs a minimum of general acceptance—not necessarily the success of the "smash hit" produced at some imaginary low common denominator, but nevertheless

1. This paper was originally given at the Eighth Congress of the International Federation of Modern Languages and Literatures in Liège, Belgium, August–September, 1960.  
2. Harley Granville-Barker, *On Translating Plays* (London, 1922), p. 19.

less some acceptance based on its comprehension and more than that, its use by a variety of people.

If one compares these requirements with those of translating other literary works—the novel, let us say—one can see the difference in the problems. We may accept unusual phrases or unnatural gestures when we can contemplate them written down, when we can imagine them modified in our minds by our intonations or gestures, even when we can see them carried out by people to whom they are native. But not when we see or hear them live, in our language, rendered by people of our culture. (Chekhov done by Russian actors in Russian is quite a different matter from Chekhov done in English by Americans.) Ortega says: "Al conversar vivimos in sociedad; al pensar quedamos solos."<sup>3</sup> The play is a conversation, a communal experience; it therefore holds a mirror up to nature which is more restrictive in its immediacy than that of any other work of art.

How does this affect the translator? One can agree safely with Saint Jerome that translations should be made "eodem spiritu quo scripti sunt." Or with Tytler, as he defined a good translation more specifically almost two hundred years ago as

. . . that in which the merit of the original work is so completely transferred into another language, as to be as distinctly apprehended, and as strongly felt, by a native of the country to which that language belongs, as it is by those who speak the language of the original work.<sup>4</sup>

One of the best contemporary translators of plays, Maurice Valency, applies this to the drama:

A work of merit doubtless deserves to be translated; it deserves to be brought over intact not only in its essence, but faithfully in every particular—its mood, its turn of thought, its trick of phrase, its savor. Without question the aim of the honest translator will be to elicit from his audience precisely the effect, neither more nor less, that the original author desired to induce in his.

But Valency also adds:

Suppose that this ideal translator limits himself to the task of turning to the best of his ability each phrase of his original into pure and idiomatic English from beginning to end—what may we expect as a result? In general, simply this: he will be said to have betrayed his author.<sup>5</sup>

William Arrowsmith, in the preface to his new translation of the *Satyricon*, puts this last point from the positive side when he says

3. José Ortega y Gasset, "Miseria y esplendor de la traducción," *Obras Completas*, V (Madrid, 1947), 433.

4. Alexander Frazer Tytler, *Essay on the Principles of Translation* (London, n.d.), p. 22.

5. Maurice Valency, "Bottom! Bless Thee! Thou Art Translated," *Theatre Arts*, XXXIII (June, 1949), 18.

that "translation to be complete usually involves a transference of culture as well as language."<sup>6</sup>

A play needs *Nachdichtung*, not "straight" translation; it needs, in Granville-Barker's phrase, an "equivalent effect." Here, then, lies the point made in this paper: the translator of a contemporary play will often keep faith with the original by departing from it in judicious fashion, not by adhering closely to what the original says. This view does not, of course, endorse unnecessary license; it does not endorse the practice of playwrights who do not know the language of the original and write plays based on so-called "rough translations." But it does disagree with Eric Bentley when he says: "I assume that a work of any merit deserves to be *translated*, not adapted."<sup>7</sup>

This paper therefore proposes a concept of transfer which adapts rather than translates. "Adaptation," Valency says, "is merely translation in terms of dramatic equivalence."<sup>8</sup> The basic considerations for the transfer of contemporary plays are three, and I hope that I will in this context be forgiven if I use the precision of the French language to give them names. (In fact, the attempt to translate these terms, which first came to me in French, proved a considerable problem, a very unsafe thing to have happen in a paper on translation.) The terms are *façon de jouer*, *façon de parler*, and *façon de vivre*. *Façon de jouer* refers to the theatrical traditions and conventions of actors, producers and audiences, to the expectations of all these participants which are based on their past theatrical experience. *Façon de parler* refers not only to levels of language, linguistic usage and the like; it has to take into account the tempo of speaking, the use of gesture, and emotional expression in general. *Façon de vivre* refers to the intellectual or philosophical or cultural aspects of a tradition as they affect the ordering and interpretation of life which is drama. All three of these aspects are of course interconnected and depend on each other.

The way in which a play is done, the *façon de jouer*, makes it necessary that the translator or adapter know something of the dramatic conventions of the country of origin as well as of his own for which he is making the adaptation. This paper is not intended to make a comprehensive survey of points of difference, but a few examples will show what is involved. One such example concerns stylized forms which a French audience, for example, is traditionally more ready to accept than is an American one. In *La Folle de Chaillot* by Giraudoux the adaptation by Valency does not at any time achieve, or intend to achieve, the stylization of the original. In the original the two main

6. Petronius, *Satyricon* (Ann Arbor, 1959), p. xx.

7. Quoted by Valency, p. 18.

8. Valency, p. 18.

characters of the first scene, the Baron and the President, simply tell each other how the one has sunk and the other one risen. This is done in a way that interrupts the conversation without interrupting the conversational style; both tell at length of dishonorable conduct on the way up or down, and thereby establish an atmosphere that is both more philosophical or general and less realistic than the adaptation in which the action proceeds with briefer interruptions and thereby attains a much greater degree of movement and of realism.

The element of stylization also appears in the use of the flashback which is a peculiarly deceptive element because the American and French ways of conjuring up the past in a play seem to be cognates. They are not. One example of this is Anouilh's *L'Alouette* which is altogether a particularly interesting case because it exists in English in two versions, one a fairly close translation and the other an adaptation, both by major playwrights with much experience in this particular field. The whole system of *L'Alouette* is based on retrospect. The trial of Joan of Arc is the actual scene, and from it we move back in time to re-enact the high points of her career, always returning to the trial and its relationship to those points. The setting is neutral and flexible and the shifts to the past are done with a minimum of equipment or other changes. Christopher Fry, the translator, adheres closely to the instructions of the original, but Lillian Hellman, the adapter, while seeming to do the same, departs from them in ways that are as subtle as they are profound and necessary. The reason is this: In the American drama, nurtured in realistic detail, the flashback takes us from present reality back to previous reality; it is intended to elucidate characters or events through references to the past. The French use of this device, on the other hand, is rarely such a clear-cut visit to the past. The purpose of the French flashback is much more complex. It is "a mélange of idea and reality, an often confusing mingling of materials symbolic of past and present, an elusive allusiveness to historical, political, cultural events. It serves plot and character less than the erection of those edifices of historical parallels, cultural undertones and social *double entendres* which the modern French drama uses extensively,"<sup>9</sup> partly as the result of its long and close relationship with the classic drama. In *L'Alouette*, Hellman version, the breaks between the trial and the flashback are always much more pronounced.

Similar subtle differences are found in Félicien Marceau's *La Bonne Soupe* and its American version by Garson Kanin. The play consists mostly of flashbacks, and the distinction between present and past reality—because reality has to be more real in America than in France—is more fully preserved in the adaptation.

9. Henry Knepler, "The Lark," *Modern Drama*, I (May, 1958), 17-18.

The close relationship of the French drama to the ancient Greek explains several other differences in the *façon de jouer* which an adapter has to take into account. The tolerance by the English audience of words without action is much smaller than by the French; description is no substitute for action to those used to Shakespeare or the Western film. Therefore when Anouilh in *L'Alouette* has King Charles describe an encounter with that dragon, La Trémouille, Hellman has them enact the scene, and thereby creates a necessary equivalent in terms of the difference between the audiences.

This reflective, reportorial tradition in the French drama also accounts for two other differences, which relate to the next main point, the *façon de parler*. The modern English drama, especially in America, generally avoids the long speech which builds a climax *within* itself, for the shorter dialogue in which the climax is achieved through interaction. Secondly, it avoids the speech in which general maxims or precepts are stated, and prefers the concrete example, preferably one related to the action or characters of the play.

A good example of both of these traditions and their effect on translation is Anouilh's *La Valse des Toréadors*. The General is much more expansively general and reflective in the original than in the translation. In his main scene with his wife, for example, the great build-ups within his speeches fall by the wayside to speed up the action; in English the dialogue builds the scene. Though the cuts are very well done, the adaptation inevitably changes the tone of the scene and the impact of the play. In French the effect is that these two characters, man and wife, talk past each other in isolation; in English their very fight diminishes the isolation of both. But the second point, the *façon de parler*, is more concerned with the use of language itself. Granville-Barker goes even further:

There is the emotional value in the very sound of words, the allusive value of familiar phrases, there is a whole vocabulary of demeanor and gestures, more or less developed in different nations and differing for each.<sup>10</sup>

Gesture and demeanor cannot concern us here, but we can note and exemplify the specific linguistic aspects. They are of course those elements in the field of dramatic translation to which the largest amount of attention is generally paid and which therefore need not detain us too long. Three elements will be considered: First, the connotations of words and phrases which are hard to translate because they are somehow idiosyncratic; second, the transfer of various social levels of language; and third, various cultural aspects, which in turn will lead us to the last main point of this paper. In each case

10. Granville-Barker, p. 22.

the basic thesis of the paper will be used to show that the use of equivalent effects is more appropriate than close translation.

The connotation of words and phrases, for example in Brecht, demonstrates idiosyncratic, untranslatable aspects, or at least aspects for which Eric Bentley has failed to find equivalents in his translations. Take one short speech from the *Dreigroschenoper*:

FILCH: Ja, sehen Sie, Herr Peachum, da war gestern so ein kleiner peinlicher Zwischenfall in der Highland Street. Ich stehe da still und unglücklich an der Ecke, Hut in der Hand, ohne etwas Böses zu ahnen . . .

Bentley's translation is quite adequate and correct.

Well, you see, Mr. Peachum, there was a little incident yesterday in Highland Street. I was standing quietly and miserably at the corner, hat in hand, intending no harm . . .

But where are those peculiar German interpolations of "da" or "so"; what does one do about similar uses of "ja" or "doch"; how can one capture the flavor of "still und unglücklich"? Only, it seems, by cutting loose from the original much more than Bentley has done. Or take Brecht's use of the word "Mensch." ("Und wovon lebt der Mensch?") It is not simply "man"; "human being" is too long and clinical. Brecht's title "Der Gute Mensch von Sezuan," inevitably becomes "The Good Woman of Setzuan" with the attendant loss of feeling.

Titles are altogether a problem which Christopher Fry, for example, has at times solved by creating a completely new one; *La Visite au Château* becomes *Ring Around the Moon*. This is better than Félicien Marceau's *La Bonne Soupe* which remains *The Good Soup* in Garson Kanin's adaptation. The title comes from the first and last scenes of the play in which the aging Marie-Paule plays roulette and says, when she wins:

Et op! Par ici la bonne soupe!

Kanin renders it as

Et op! The good soup! This way with the good soup.

Marie-Paule is to be a bit avid here, and vulgar, but the phrase is not idiomatic English and any attempt to convey the meaning through tone, inflection or gesture will make her more vulgar than is called for. Kanin stays too close to the original and preserves a title that is meaningless in translation.

Levels of language are among the most complex subjects in the translation of plays, and in general the lower the desired level, the harder the task of conveying it in a different language. An example of this difficulty is Scene VI of *Le Balcon* by Jean Genet, which

shifts from the level of the house of illusions, a middle-class linguistic level, to the revolutionaries, who speak a more colloquial idiom which Mr. Frechtman's translation does not reproduce. The fine shades of language in Genet's *Les Bonnes* are also almost untranslatable in a direct way, for there we have the level of Madame, with the maids speaking to Madame; then that of the maids speaking as Madame in the impersonations; and finally that of the maids speaking as maids. Transformation of one sort or another is at the center of Genet's dramatic plan; much is therefore inevitably lost, as the equivalents are generally impossible to find, especially in the American idiom, not only for linguistic but for social or cultural reasons.

Examples of this difficulty can also be found in the translation of American plays. The German version of Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* (*Endstation Sehnsucht*) is a case in point. The whole contrast between Stanley Kowalski and Blanche duBois is lost in the poor, closely rendered German version, not only because they inevitably say "Sie" to each other, but because Stanley's vulgarity and Blanche's pseudo upper-class language are given in about the same way. By the time Stella refers to Stanley's poker game as his *Herrenabend* one wonders if the Kowalskis or the duBois had lived at Belle Reve Plantation.

With this we have arrived at the point where close translation merges with poor translation. There is no need to spend time on simple mistakes such as this one from *A Streetcar Named Desire*:

BLANCHE: I know you must have some liquor on the place!  
Where could it be, I wonder? Oh, I spy, I spy.

The translator renders the last words as "Oh, ich spionierte, ich spionierte."

Closeness to the original can produce such mistranslations as this example of Lorca's *La Casa de Bernarda Alba*; Adela's exclamation:

Aqui se acabaron las voces del presidio!

becomes "There'll be an end to prison voices here!" A good pony for a schoolboy, but surely an impossible line for a living person supposedly speaking English.

Good equivalents are generally those which take into consideration not only the idiomatic but the cultural elements. Here are a few brief examples. In Anouilh's *L'Hurluberlu*, Tante Bise says reproachfully to her brother, the General, about a man whom he suspects of having seduced his wife: "Ton Amil!" This becomes, rightly, "Your best friend!" After all, in America even stray acquaintances are described as friends, and a stronger term was therefore needed. In the same scene, the translator replaced "whiskey" in the original by "brandy."

Again this is a change which leaves the original intention intact: with the French middle-class whiskey now is a fairly sophisticated drink; brandy is a much more usual beverage. In the United States the opposite is the case; moreover, while brandy is associated with France, a reference to whiskey would jar the American audience unnecessarily. A separate paper could easily be written on the uses and translations of drinks, a good note to end this section devoted to linguistic matters. But as a transition to the last point, the *façon de vivre*, no better example could be found than a line from Anouilh's *L'Alouette*. The Dauphin is talking to Joan about his mistress Agnès Sorel:

Tu sais que c'est à cause de mes jambes qu'Agnès ne m'aimera jamais.

Fry, in his translation, tones down the rational finality of the future tense ("ne m'aimera jamais"):

It's because of my legs that Agnes can't bring herself to love me.

Hellman, in her adaptation, makes it:

It's because of my legs that Agnes can never really love me.

The "really" must be a concession to the great American dream that even such a relationship is not possible without at least a little love.

National characteristics, intellectual inclinations and cultural aspects in general occasion the last group of equivalent effects which the translator must search for. In *La Folle de Chaillot*, Valency of course substitutes in his translation historical references which will be comprehensible to an American audience; he cannot substitute for the central fact that to any French audience the idea of drilling for oil under Paris would be both reprehensible and ludicrous, while it would seem a lot less unnatural in the country of which Los Angeles is one of the major cities. In *L'Alouette*, Hellman's adaptation simplifies characters, situations, and other references because she rightly assumes that an American audience is unlikely to know as much about Joan of Arc as a French one.

Anouilh's generals illustrate the fact that concepts of military commanders differ from country to country. In *La Valse des Toréadors* General St. Pé speaks a lot more than in the American translation. Even so he speaks almost too much and too well for the Anglo-Saxon concept of the blustering, swearing general. That other general, in *L'Hurluberlu*, has the same problem. The failure of that play in America where it was given after its great Paris success, and with an excellent production, can be epitomized by the play's subtitle: *Le Réactionnaire Amoureux*. An American audience may comprehend a reactionary general, though he could not be to the manner born; it

may even comprehend an amorous general. But the combination is deadly. The translation vainly attempted to make the General more palatable by making him a conservative instead of a fascist, and by giving him an extended record in the War and the Resistance to take some of the sting out of his rather repulsive views.

A French general is expected to be different from an American, but these differences must not lead to a major shift in sympathy on the part of the audience. A further example of such a shift, not in the military realm, is *La Bonne Soupe*. The meaning of the play is made clear when in the first flashback the Mother says to Marie-Paule, the heroine:

Accepte n'importe quoi dans la vie. N'importe quoi. Mais pas de vivre sans bonne. Tu m'entends. Pas de vivre sans bonne.

This sets the stage for the woman driven by fear and desire—but the desire is for economic security. Marie-Paule walks her road to Calvary—she seeks security through the use of sex. For the American audience, an affluent society no longer used to such a motive, the inevitable shift occurs: the means, sex, become the end, and we have little more than another salacious life history on stage, because the equivalent effect either has not been found or simply does not exist.

Matters of sex and love make many shifts necessary. The continental European attitude is much more matter-of-fact than the American. Even Ondine, the nymph who walks in and out of the life of the knight Hans in Giraudoux' play is more down-to-earth than the realistic characters of Inge or Gibson, let alone Tennessee Williams. Quite often the graphic, unromantic, descriptive matters related to sex are omitted for Anglo-Saxon audiences, as when the General in *La Valse des Toréadors* speaks of his first years with his wife. Some of the same matter-of-factness disappears from *La Bonne Soupe*, *Der Besuch der Alten Dame* and many others. Sex remains as prevalent and often as outspoken or at least as titillating. But it is made more romantic. In the original of the Duerrenmatt play, Claire Zachanassian says to Ill (who is named Schill in the translation): "Du bist alt geworden. Und grau und versoffen." In English she merely says: "You are grey now, and soft." The original leaves Ill everywhere with a lot less dignity.

The matter-of-factness also penetrates other areas of life, of which religion is one example. In *L'Hurluberlu*, for instance, the Curé plays a much more lively and often less churchly part than in its translation. It is he, for example, who introduces the idea of putting on that Ionesco-like play which ends Act II. In *L'Alouette* the changes made by Hellman are as significant as they are extensive. She handles religion with great care, especially when it bears directly on the Catholic

faith, or at least can be taken to bear on it. For that reason she, for example, takes most of the complexity out of the Inquisitor's views, mutes his dialectic paradoxes, and removes most of the typical anti-clericalism of Anouilh.

Lastly there are to be considered general matters of human relations, particularly between classes, which are hard to transfer from one culture to another. One of the best, because most subtle, examples is in *Les Bonnes*, Genet's morbid play. The contrast between the Solange-Claire scenes and the maids-mistress scenes has to be made differently in English. Madame's part is cut, especially her lament for the imprisonment of Monsieur ("qui est la délicatesse même"—how misleading it would be to translate that closely) and her own minutely detailed feelings of discomfort. Madame treats Solange much more intimately than an Anglo-Saxon mistress would permit herself to be with her maid; too intimately to make an American audience feel that a more or less normal servant-master relationship continues to exist underneath it. The English version therefore contains less intimacy and contact than the original; if the translator had not made these modifications, then the contrast between the relative realism of the maid-mistress scenes and the relative surrealism of the Solange-Claire scenes would not have become apparent.

Other, smaller changes follow the same pattern of adaptation. The translated Claire Zachanassian has done more charity work than Duerrenmatt's original, in keeping with the fact that rich Americans do more public good than rich Europeans. Ill, her former lover, talks much more familiarly to the policeman in the translation than in the original, in keeping with the fact that "die Behörde" in Central Europe is something much more formidable than the Civil Service in America. In *La Folle de Chaillot* "Messieurs les représentants du peuple" are among those who descend that staircase to the nether regions at the end of the play; in the translation they are omitted, in keeping with the fact that though Americans, like Frenchmen, look askance at their elected representatives, they do not consider them harmful or dangerous.

To conclude: The contemporary stage play is transferred to become a stage play in another environment. The very fact that it is contemporary precludes the knowledge whether it will ever assume the place of a classic. We hope that there are plays today whose ideas, characters, and action are so basic that they will become part of the permanent literature of their country or civilization. When that happens, if it ever does, then the problem of translation will have to be faced differently, and a close rendering may then be in order, to take its place.

among the steady progression of new translations of that work. For, in spite of Schlegel and Thieck, a translation does not function like the original. And the opponents of the concept of adaptation advanced here can console themselves with one basic fact: though the original remains *aere perennior* at home, the translator has to be called on abroad to adapt it anew for each generation.

HENRY KNEPLER

# THE THEATER OF ALBERT CAMUS

"IT IS NOT EASY TO BECOME WHAT ONE IS,  
TO REDISCOVER ONE'S ESSENTIAL BALANCE."

—Albert Camus, *Noces*

ALBERT CAMUS' EXPRESSION of "tragedy in modern dress" portrays men struggling with the emotional and psychological facts of alienation by means of man-made justice. *Caligula* (from the play of the same name, written in 1938, first performed in 1945), apprehending the alienation inherent in the human condition, exercises absolute power to match the absurdity of the world, inevitably to find the same terrible face of self-separation in his own mirror.<sup>1</sup> Martha, Jan, and their mother, in *Le Malentendu* (1944), murder and misunderstand in a search for self-definition under "the injustice of sky and climate." The Plague divides the men and women of *L'Etat de siège* (1948) from their own dignity and, in the end, from their lives, by exercising a justice as logical and inhuman as Caligula's; and the terrorists of *Les Justes* (1949) attempt to redeem the myth of absolute justice with their lives, sacrificing the relative truths which alone are available to man. Those who seek self-identity fail to recognize the futility of such a task in an absurd universe. Those who deal in justice misunderstand the "pathos of distance" between mankind and the good. Writes Camus:

There are no just men, only hearts more or less poor in justice. Living permits us, at least, to learn this and to add to the sum of our actions some good which will compensate a bit for the evil we have put into the world. This right to life which coincides with the chance for reparation is the natural right of every man, even the worst. The lowest of criminals and the most incorruptible of judges here find themselves side by side, equally miserable and equally united.<sup>2</sup>

Alternating between a desperate lyricism which is well known to readers of his nonpolitical essays (*L'Envers et l'endroit*, *Noces*, *L'été*) and the enigmatic parables of his widely known *récits* (*L'Etranger*,

1. Albert Camus, *Caligula* (Paris, 1947). Throughout this article the other editions of Camus' plays are *Le Malentendu* (Paris, 1947); *L'Etat de siège* (Paris, 1948); *Les Justes* (Paris, 1950). For the sake of brevity, future references are given in the text, with indication of act and scene, or, in the case of *L'Etat de siège*, part. All translations from the French are mine. In addition to these original plays, Camus' adaptations are: *La Dernière fleur* by James Thurber (Paris, 1952); *Les Esprits* by Pierre de Larivée (Paris, 1953); *La Dévotion à la croix* by Pedro Calderón de la Barca (Paris, 1953); *Un cas intéressant* by Dino Buzzatti (Paris, 1955); *Requiem pour une nonne* by William Faulkner (Paris, 1956); *Le Chevalier d'Olmedo* by Lope de Vega Carpio (Paris, 1957); *Les Possédés* by Fyodor Dostoyevski (Paris, 1959).

2. Albert Camus, "Réflexions sur la guillotine," in *Réflexions sur la peine capitale*, with Arthur Koestler (Paris, 1957), p. 169.

(*La Peste*, *La Chute*), Camus' plays embody his thought in dramatic action at once tantalizing and obscure. Gabriel Marcel's judgment, that the theater of Camus fails as a dramatic presentation of his ideas, is frequently echoed, and not always, one must note, by critics who are primarily concerned with the possibilities of financial success. "The essential words," wrote Robert Kemp, theater critic for *Le Monde*, "are pronounced at moments when the drama, the brutal drama . . . absorbs the spectator's nervous energy. It is a fine art, no doubt, to mingle thus action and thought, not to separate them," but, he concludes, "the most meaningful words pass so quickly and remain so mysterious that they only brush our consciousness."<sup>3</sup> Germaine Brée questions the strength of the concrete situation to carry the full weight of the thought.<sup>4</sup> To date, the only major staging of Camus in America has elicited mixed comment, but the accusation of oratory mixed with soliloquy, theatricality with intellectualism, seems to predominate.<sup>5</sup>

In his introduction to *Révolte dans les Asturies*, a four-act attempt at "collective creation" published in Algiers in 1936, Camus defines the direction which he and his friends had intended for their drama. Here he suggests a conception of theater which subsequently received fuller elaboration in his later individual theatrical works. "Theatre is not written, or only as a last resort. This attempt at collective creation [is] tentative, it introduces action into a frame that is not suited to it: the theatre. For action to reach absurdity, that form of grandeur particular to men, it is enough that it should lead to death."<sup>6</sup> The theater is for Camus a place where each spectator has "a rendez-vous with himself," where he can experience a self-definition occasioned by the soliloquies of "those large figures who cry out on the stage."<sup>7</sup> Camus' own interest in the psychological motivations of his characters is admittedly limited. His "parables," as Henri Peyre calls the *récits*, comparing them to the works of Kafka, Gide and Thomas Mann, are concerned with something other than what is familiarly termed "character." In the twenty years between the writing of *L'Envers et l'endroit* and the recent edition, writes Camus in his 1957 preface, "I have learned [little more] about people because I am more interested in their destinies than in their reactions and because destinies frequently repeat themselves."<sup>8</sup> The characters of Camus' plays may indeed appear to be "symbolic marionettes" to P.-H. Simon, but this

3. Robert Kemp, *La Vie du théâtre* (Paris, 1956), pp. 269-270. Review of *Les Justes* reprinted from *Le Monde*, August 13, 1950.

4. Germaine Brée, *Camus* (New Brunswick, 1959), p. 184.

5. *Time*, Feb. 29, 1960.

6. Cited by Brée, p. 31.

7. Albert Camus, *L'Envers et l'endroit* (Paris, 1957), p. 24.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

does not prevent him from reading with passion the cerebral outcries which such a theater of ideas provides.<sup>9</sup>

Plays, however, are not restricted to soliloquy alone. Camus, at various times actor, playwright, producer and adapter, was aware of this fact, meeting it with varying degrees of success. He experimented with group movement, contrast, *divertissements* in *Caligula*. He envisaged a striking red-and-black setting for Faulkner's world in his adaptation of *Requiem for a Nun*, and in an all-out effort, together with Barrault, to "make a myth intelligible to the audience of 1948" in *L'Etat de siège*, he offered "a spectacle whose avowed intention is to combine all forms of dramatic expression from the lyrical monologue to collective theatre, passing through pantomime, simple dialogue, farce and the chorus."<sup>10</sup> The play, one should note, was Camus' least successful and one of his few creations to be criticized on artistic grounds. Visually superabundant, at times even noisy and hurried, *L'Etat de siège* with its simple allegory, in which the Plague evidently stands for bureaucracy and the collapse of human values in society, fails to offer enough for the mind. Camus' most successful plays have been *Caligula* and *Les Justes*, which, though widely different in presentation, share a common theme. The reason for the relative failure of *Le Malentendu* is a matter for speculation; it is the most tightly knit, classic of the plays. The language is beautiful, simple, and the moments of greatest intellectual intensity do not always occur during those instants of intense physical action which made Kemp regret a conflict between watching and understanding. One possible answer may lie in what appears to be the utter nihilism of the play. But the same accusation has been leveled against *Caligula*, which nevertheless had over 400 performances in Paris.

Camus has replied to the criticism of nihilism and despair by recalling the drama of Aeschylus.

Aeschylus is often despairing; however, he radiates and warms. At the center of his universe we find not lack of meaning, but enigma, that is, a meaning which is hard to decipher because it dazzles. And in the same way, the flames of our history may appear unbearable to the unworthy, but obstinately faithful sons of Greece, but they bear it, at last, because they want to understand it. At the heart of our work, be it black, an inexhaustible sun shines.<sup>11</sup>

*Caligula* and *Le Malentendu*, which appear to Philip Thody to represent a world without values, where the absurd reduces all actions to equal insignificance,<sup>12</sup> become, in the light of Camus' conception

9. *L'Homme en procès* (Neuchâtel & Paris, 1950), p. 97 ff.

10. Camus, *L'Etat de siège*, "Avertissement."

11. Albert Camus, *L'Eté* (Paris, 1954), pp. 136-137.

12. Philip Thody, *Albert Camus, A Study of his Work* (London, 1957), p. 17.

of drama, artistic testimonies to the essential alienation and grandeur of the human condition. Having relinquished at last "the illusion of another world" which sacrifices human values, the dramatist's thought can "spring forth in images . . . in myths . . . myths with no deeper meaning than that of human suffering and like it, endlessly fertile. Not the divine fable which amuses and blinds, but the face, the gesture and the terrestrial drama in which are embodied a difficult wisdom and a passion with no tomorrow."<sup>13</sup> The enigma, divine for Aeschylus, is earthly for Camus. "The smile of Apollo" is transformed into the agony of the medieval crucifix and, in the modern world, the absurd joy of the suicidal Kirilov as he writes his false confession or the stony face of Martha as she seeks liberty in the unwitting murder of her brother (*Le Malentendu*). Thody has correctly interpreted "revolt" in Camus to be essentially conservative, bourgeois in its aims, protecting human life against violence and improving the material and spiritual conditions under which it is lived.<sup>14</sup> The earlier plays which turn about the concept of the "absurd" express a similar attitude on Camus' part. What is the absurd, if not confrontation of the irrationality of the world with man's fatal desire for clarity? The absurd is Martha explaining the ultimately senseless murder of her brother to her brother's wife: "If you must know, there has been a misunderstanding. And if you understood the world at all, you would not be surprised" (*Le Malentendu*, III, 3). It is Caligula, explaining his despair to Caesonia:

Men weep because things are not what they should be . . . Oh! Caesonia, I knew that one could be despairing, but I didn't know what the word meant. I thought, like everyone else, that it was a malady of the soul. Not at all, it's the body which suffers. My skin hurts, my chest, my limbs. My head is empty and my heart sick. And the most horrible thing is this taste in my mouth. Not blood, not death, not fever, but all three at once. All I have to do is move my tongue and everything becomes black, people sicken me. How hard it is, how bitter it is to become a man! (*Caligula*, I, 12).

Revolt, the refusal to be crushed by the absurd, is found in the voices of Maria, Victoria, Dora, who demand their right to live the limited life which can be theirs, if only men will allow it to unfold.

Human alienation is intensified by those who live according to absolute, transcendent values which have no meaning in the world of Camus. Total peace, absolute justice, inexorable logic—all misunderstandings of the essential nature of man, which is eternally and pathetically distant from supreme ends. "An unpunished crime, the

13. Albert Camus, *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* (Paris, 1942), pp. 158-159.  
14. Thody, p. 66.

Greeks believed, infected the city," notes Camus. And he adds, "But condemned innocence, or crime punished too much, in the long run soils it no less."<sup>15</sup> The modern tragedy stems from a misunderstanding, a fatal misunderstanding not of the divine ways of the gods, but of the finite, physical way of man. Camus' great ideal is *la mesure*, the familiar golden mean, in which man is both related to his natural environment, the earth, and to man and all that the concept man implies — mortality, responsibility, compassion. When the essential balance is disturbed, the scales jangle and dance in the frenzy which is modern history.

*Caligula*, the earliest of Camus' plays, tells of Rome's young emperor who, driven to despair by the realization of life's absurdity, asks for the moon and plays god with the destinies of his subjects. Caligula is frank and open in his ambition. "This world, as it is, is not bearable. I therefore need the moon, or happiness, or immortality, something perhaps mad, but which is not of this world" (*Caligula*, I, 5). His subjects believe his sister Drusilla's death has caused this madness. For Caligula, this abrupt end to an incestuous love and, even more, the wearing away of grief itself, are merely signs of a simple truth which is difficult to bear: "Men die and they are not happy" (I, 5). Caligula expresses his revolt in a series of theatrical gestures all of which directly involve those around him.

Destiny is not understood and therefore I have made myself destiny. I have put on the stupid and incomprehensible face of the gods. . . That's dramatic art! The error of all these men is not believing sufficiently in the theatre. If they did they would know that every man may play celestial tragedies and become god. One has only to harden one's heart (III, 3).

Caligula decides to make men "live in the truth" by eliminating contradiction and chance, by exercising his liberty absolutely. He becomes the embodiment of disinterested evil, and dissipates the meaning of life for his subjects by behaving with an inexorable, destructive logic which murders for an ideal — demonstrating life's utter meaninglessness. His logic is the more blinding because it is, in fact, irrefutable. Far from being a detestable villain, Caligula is the most pitiable character in the play. Most cursed because most clear-sighted, he puts men to death arbitrarily in order to make them understand what he has himself understood too well, "that it's not necessary to have done something in order to die" (II, 5).

Caligula's passion for the impossible is stronger than the passion of those around him for life. Absolute liberty is always exercised at the expense of someone, he notes, and admits this is unfortunate. Abso-

15. Camus, "Réflexions sur la guillotine," p. 163.

lute liberty is destructive of relative justice. Caligula is as outspoken as the Plague in *L'Etat de siège* and Clamence in *La Chute*. All three conceive a rigorously logical attitude before the problem of suffering in an apparently meaningless world. Though Caligula cannot be refuted in logical terms, the very fact that men cannot live every minute with absurdity finally rouses them to revolt. The leader of the conspirators discusses this fact with Caligula:

CHEREA: I don't hate you. I judge you to be dangerous and cruel, egotistical and vain. But I cannot hate you because I don't believe you're happy. And I can't despise you because I know you are not a coward.

CALIGULA: Why then do you want to kill me?

CHEREA: I told you: I think you're dangerous. I have the taste and the need for security. Most men are like me. They are incapable of living in a universe where the most bizarre thought can become part of reality at any moment... I'm the same, I do not want to live in such a universe....

CALIGULA: Security and logic do not go together.

CHEREA: I want to live and to be happy. One can be neither one nor the other by following through all the consequences of the absurd....

CALIGULA: You must believe in some superior ideal.

CHEREA: I believe that some actions are finer than others.

CALIGULA: I think they are all equivalent (III, 6).

While Caligula's search for the impossible adds to the sum of misery, it yet serves the positive function of inciting others to self-awareness. As Cherea says, "He makes one think. He makes everyone think. Insecurity makes one think. And that's why he is hated so much" (IV, 4). However, when the conspirators come to kill him, Caligula is in reality hoping for them to come. His initial sense of alienation has been intensified in "the sterile and magnificent country of murderers." When Caesonia asks him if this "terrifying freedom" is happiness, Caligula tightens his arm across her throat and exclaims:

Without it I would have been a satisfied man. Thanks to it, I have achieved the divine clairvoyance of the solitary man. (As his exaltation mounts, he gradually strangles Caesonia who does not resist, merely puts her hands out slightly. He speaks to her, leaning over her ear.) I live, I kill, I exercise the intoxicating power of the destroyer, next to which that of the creator looks like a mockery. That is happiness, this unbearable deliverance, this universal contempt, the blood and hatred around me, the peerless isolation of the man who can see his whole life at a glance, the boundless joy of the unpunished assassin, this implacable logic which crushes human life (*he laughs*), which crushes you, Caesonia, to complete at last the eternal solitude I desire (IV, 12).

Then, in his solitude, gazing in a mirror at his own image which is neither innocent nor guilty, Caligula realizes that absolute freedom is a tiring burden. "In this world with no judge, where no one is innocent," there is not even anyone to condemn him. He awaits assassination by those who refuse to be sacrificed, even if logically, to the impossible, and flings a chair at the mirror, crying, "To history, Caligula, to history" (IV, 13).

A sense of alienation underlies the actions of all four characters in *Le Malentendu*. The over-all "misunderstanding" which unites them is a common belief that a place exists where one can find total self-definition. The plot is spare; it repeats with variation an archetypal pattern in literature.<sup>16</sup> Martha and her mother, innkeepers somewhere in central Europe, have murdered and robbed their few guests to amass enough money to leave "this land with no horizon, this land of shadow." Martha dreams of being by the sea, under the sun, where she can begin to live. Her mother wants only repose, one last murder which will relieve her of the wearying task of dragging drugged bodies to the river, bodies that find more easily than she the rest she seeks. To this inn comes Jan, the prodigal son who conceals his identity in order to discover how he can help his mother and sister, how he can accomplish a duty he feels will complete his self-identity. To no avail his wife Maria tries to dissuade him from his plan, tries to take him back to the land of sun in which they have been happy together. He stays the night, is drugged and murdered; then his identity is revealed.

The setting is grim and overpowering, combining two injustices which Camus conceives as imposed upon man from outside, the obvious injustice of mortality and the injustice of sky and climate. In the 1957 preface to *L'Envers et l'endroit* he wrote, "One finds many injustices in the world, but there is one of which no one speaks, that of climate . . . When poverty is joined to this life without a sky and without hope which . . . I have discovered in the horrible suburbs of our cities, then the ultimate injustice, the most repulsive, is consummated . . . the double humiliation of misery and ugliness."<sup>17</sup> Partly because of such an injustice Martha is willing to murder. "I have no more patience for this Europe where autumn looks like spring and spring has the odor of misery. But I imagine with delight another land where summer crushes everything, where the rains of winter drown the cities, where, in short, things are what they are" (*Le Malentendu*, II, 1). Martha's desire is human, and her actions in behalf of this desire are human as well. She is no more guilty of the murder

16. Reino Virtanen, "Camus' *Le Malentendu* and some analogues," *Comparative Literature*, X (Summer, 1958), 232-240.

17. Camus, *L'Envers et l'endroit*, pp. 16-17.

than her mother, who kills by indifference rather than by interest, no more or less guilty than Jan, who has, for a reason never made explicit, left his family in need and isolation for so many years, and who now commits still another sin against the balance of human justice when he deliberately destroys his happiness with Maria in order to find his self-identity through his family. Reino Virtanen, who has traced some analogues of *Le Malentendu*, makes a crucial observation on Camus' alteration of the archetypal pattern: "In this story the tragic function belongs not to the victim but to the assassin."<sup>18</sup>

Martha and her mother are practiced murderers, but Jan complicates their impersonal routine by speaking openly to them in an attempt to force a recognition from their side. Martha complains, "This traveler is too distracted and looks too innocent. What would the world become if condemned men began to confide their emotional problems to their executioners? It's a bad principle. But it also irritates me, and I will bring to my dealings with him some of the anger I feel before the stupidity of man" (I, 8). The two women justify their habit of murder in much the same way that Caligula legitimates his limitless exercise of power: life is more cruel than they are. The identity which Jan seeks will be found in his function as victim, an ironic definition, certainly, but one which is central to all resolutions in the play. Too late he says, "I feel this house is not mine" (II, 6). When her mother recalls these last words, Martha replies:

This house, indeed, is not his, but that's because it's not anyone's. And no one will ever find here forgetfulness or warmth. If he had understood this sooner, he would have spared both himself and us. He would have spared us the task of teaching him that this room is made to sleep in and this world is made to die in (II, 8).

This is Martha's truth, one which is in no way modified by her discovery that murder has at last isolated her even from her mother. For the mother, grief at recognizing she has killed her own son succeeds in changing habit into consciousness, and she joins him in death. Her suffering has no meaning in an unreasonable world, and her death testifies to the absurd. Maria, learning of her husband's death, expresses her disbelief in a poignant, almost child-like statement: "People don't just die like that when someone is waiting for them" (III, 3). Yet they do. Maria's grief is, she thinks, boundless, but Martha assures her that grief, too, does not last, as Caligula also learned. In the last act, Martha tries to tear Maria's "illusions" from her:

MARTHA: I can't die leaving you with the idea that you are right, that love is not in vain, and that this is an accident. For now we are truly in the Order. I must persuade you of this.

18. Virtanen, p. 237.

MARIA: What order?

MARTHA: The one in which no one is ever recognized . . . The fool! he has what he wanted, he found the one he was looking for. Here we are all in the Order. Understand this, neither for him nor for us, neither in life nor in death, is there any homeland nor any peace . . . We have been robbed, I tell you . . . Your grief will never equal the injustice done to man . . . (III, 3).

Martha is perhaps right in her over-all view of the human condition, but she has not understood the lesson of her brother's death; victim and murderer are equally pitiable; and could they understand this, human justice would begin. The round of misunderstandings is endless as long as man in his essential state of alienation continues to add to the injustice already in the world.

*L'Etat de siège* allegorizes the plague as a specific injunction against modern bureaucracy and all forms of totalitarianism. As Camus distinctly states in his "Avertissement," this play is in no way meant to be an adaptation of his novel, *La Peste*. In fact, Barrault had originally intended it as an adaptation of Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year*. Instead, Camus wrote a series of dialogues, as he says, around "the canvas of the Plague." The Plague, along with his Secretary, comes to Cadiz, and establishes a new order, in which men no longer die by chance, but according to a pre-established list, a much more humane method, he says, reminding us of Caligula and Martha. The existent government is replaced, the will of the citizens is gradually weakened, and their pitiful terror seems without issue until one man, Diego, becomes indignant enough to forget his fear. The spell is broken, the wind rises from the sea, and human life begins to resume its daily course.

While lacking the dramatic and intellectual complexity of Camus' other plays, *L'Etat de siège* presents characters who strongly recall Camus' *récits* and strongly suggests several of his central themes in simplified forms. Nada, the old drunkard who represents nihilism, sees the comet which augurs the arrival of the Plague and announces:

I am firm in my principles: life and death are equivalent; man is the wood of which stakes are made . . . That comet is a portent of evil . . . I expected it. Once you have cooked your three meals, worked your eight hours and provided for your wife and your mistress, you think everything is in order. No, you are not all set; you are all lined up. Carefully lined up, with placid faces, there you are ripe for calamity (*L'Etat de siège*, Pt. I).

Because men allow evil and injustice to prevail in human institutions, as long as their personal lives are undisturbed, they are ripe for a total evil which will take away the restricted pleasures they value.

The governor of Cadiz at first decrees a "double-think," proclaiming

that nothing has happened, that the comet has not passed and that the Plague has not come. Diego is initially unwilling to face the truth. He tells Nada that Victoria, his fiancée, is waiting for him, that he has no time for prophecies of doom. "I don't believe the calamity you announce. I must attend to being happy. It's a long task, which requires peace in the cities and in the countryside" (Pt. I). But at last revolted by the organization, which stifles happiness, he decides to aid his fellow men. The Plague has brought absolute justice and a promise of sacrificing all men without discrimination. All carrying the marks of the plague on their flesh, they are all suspect.

The Judge, Victoria's father, is a coward willing to turn against his own to save himself from disease. He reminds us of Clamence of *La Chute, le juge-pénitent*, without ironic self-awareness. Camus' dislike of judges is nowhere as strongly evident as in this play. But the judge is no more unjust than some of his intended victims. When a group of citizens manages to steal the Secretary's notebook which lists all names and by which the moment of death can be determined with a simple stroke of the pencil, each man tries to cross out names for motives of personal vengeance. They all become executioners when the opportunity presents itself. Their power is short-lived, for the Plague has another copy of the notebook, but Camus' comment on man's gift for dispensing justice has already been made.

Whereas Diego conquers his fear by a resurgence of his sense of human dignity, Victoria, who is the heroine of the play, is at no time afraid. She wants her life and her love and is willing to risk anything to retain these simple human values. When she dies, Diego realizes too late that his desire to help his fellow man has allowed her death to occur, and offers his life in exchange for hers. The bargain is accepted by the Plague, who has begun to lose his power, and Victoria triumphs in sorrow, vindicating the values which absolutes threaten, fleshy love and the transient beauties of the earth.

In *Les Justes* a small group of terrorists plans and carries out the assassination of the Grand-Duke Sergei Alexandrovitch in Moscow in 1905. Kaliayev, who throws the bomb and is arrested and hanged, and Dora, who makes the bomb, are the central characters. They justify terrorism for a Utopia in which absolute justice will reign. The setting and atmosphere are almost Dostoyevskian in character: a small sordid room in which demented exaltation alternates with utter despair. More recently, Camus' admiration for Dostoyevski resulted in his successful adaptation of *Les Possédés*, whose plot as he conceives it is in many ways similar to *Les Justes*. But Kaliayev and Dora are not monumental sacrifices to the terrible burden of free will. Instead, they are torn between a misconceived sense of duty toward absolute justice and an

overwhelming pity for human life. Only one of the terrorists, Stepan, is single in his purpose. He wants the revolution to succeed, because he loves justice more than life. He is suspicious of Kaliayev, who is emotional and poetic.

STEPAN: You recite poetry, you want to throw yourself under the horses hoofs, and now, you contemplate suicide . . . (*He looks at him.*) I have no confidence in you.

KALIAYEV: (*calming his anger*) You don't know me, comrade. I love life. I am not simply bored. I have joined the revolution because I love life.

STEPAN: It is not life which I love, but justice, which is higher than life (*Les Justes*, I).

Kaliayev is unable to throw his bomb the first time, because he sees two children in the carriage with the Grand-Duke. Stepan construes this as the choice of a man who lives only in the instant, only in the present. "All right, then," he shouts at Kaliayev, "choose charity and heal only the sickness of every day, instead of the revolution which wants to heal all ills, present and to come" (II). But Dora and Kaliayev are "delicate assassins"; even in destruction, there is an order, there are limits. "We kill to build a world where no one will ever kill! We are willing to be criminals so that the earth will one day be inhabited by innocent men" (I). And Kaliayev is willing to be a criminal only because he believes that he can atone for his crime with his life. He knows that "man does not live by justice alone" (II), but he and Dora sacrifice love and pity, because they live in terms of the future. Dora recognizes her alienation: "We are not of this world, we are the just. There is a warmth which is not for us. Oh! have pity on the just!" (III).

Only in the fourth act is Camus' total irony unveiled. Until his imprisonment, Kaliayev is still able to believe that dying for an ideal can justify it. A prisoner, Foka, enters his cell and in a friendly conversation it is revealed that Foka has killed three men in a drunken rage. When he learns that Kaliayev has killed a grand-duke, for which the penalty is hanging, he tries to leave suddenly. Kaliayev forces the revelation that Foka is the hangman, whose sentence is shortened by a year for each man he hangs. The line between victim and executioner grows thinner. Finally, the widow of the Grand-Duke comes to visit Kaliayev in prison, believing that only a murderer can understand her experience of despair and absurdity. Kaliayev refuses to ask God's forgiveness, as she entreats. As long as he is to die, he is not a murderer. Absolute justice, to which he offers his life, will exonerate him.

The final act shows Dora and the revolutionaries waiting to find

out if Kaliayev has betrayed their ideal and repented or if he has, instead, died. Dora, in her anguish, begins to doubt the moral position of the just assassins. "If death is the only solution, we are on the wrong path. The right path leads to life, to the sunshine. One cannot always be cold" (V). Perhaps taking responsibility for all evil in the world is not a gesture of sacrifice, but one of pride, pride which will be punished. At last, she hears the painful account of Kaliayev's death—he has not betrayed their ideal. However, the report of his final horrible cry brings Dora to the brink of absurdity. Her only consolation is a decision to be the next one to throw a bomb. Exaltation and oblivion will fill the void left by the death of human values.

After *Les Justes*, Camus turned to adapting plays from the works of other authors, among them Calderón, Lope de Vega, Faulkner, and Dostoyevski. As Germaine Brée points out, most of these adaptations deal with a similar situation. The hero is marked for destruction from the beginning; he is to be the victim of some form of collective murder, and "in this murder, consciously or not, he is a willing participant."<sup>19</sup> Caligula, Diego, Kaliayev, and Jan are victims of this same vague tribunal before which all men are to some extent both innocent and guilty, where it is impossible to distinguish the criminal from the executioner.

In the theater of Camus characters search for self-identity through the pursuit of absolutes. They are portrayed as fatally failing to understand that self-identity is illusory and unattainable, that the static resolution they desire is a denial of the very nature of man, which is eternally separated from clarity and from justice. Weighing consciousness against oblivion, reason against submersion in life, responsibility against evasion, Camus' plays express a true humanism which maintains a precarious balance. Each excess increases the alienation of man from himself and the alienation of man from man. In a world where the criminal is no further from justice than his prosecutor, the only things worth striving for and preserving are those which recognize man's limitations. In a theater where each man has a rendez-vous with himself, Camus creates a gesture at once supplicating and defiant before a world in which all men are guilty.

19. Brée, p. 144.

# MAETERLINCK AND THE QUEST FOR A MYSTIC TRAGEDY OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

MAETERLINCK's ROLE in preparing the way for the removal of theatrical concentration from the purely social area is yet to be justly evaluated. His theater represents the first moderately successful effort in the last three decades of the nineteenth century to employ the stage for something other than a platform from which to damn social wrongs.

Since the myth has been cut from under modern man, he must find a new channel through which to plumb the arcana of his being. Like the Greeks he must seek to purge himself of the stultifying effects of bourgeois existence. Greek tragedy in performance provided a medium by which spectators could escape from the rational world and become reintegrated into the primordial, ante-social unity. Such a mystico-aesthetic process takes on grave importance, especially when one considers how much more complex and ramified society has become since even the days of Ibsen. Commercial entertainment freezes the masses in a stratum of consciousness so refined and so far removed from the depths of being that too often the latter assert themselves in a violent manner. We have learned all too painfully that mankind cannot remain oblivious to what the Symbolists called "la vraie vie." There exists the world of consciousness and there exists, as is now indisputably known, the world of the unconscious. It is needless to cite the fact that many of the world's great artists acknowledge unqualifiedly the primacy of the unconscious in their aesthetic endeavor. Dreamwork, rêverie, and associative thinking processes are now regarded as the chief sources of artistic creativity. Here is spontaneity; here is the childlike freshness which permits the artist to continuously rediscover the world anew; here also lies the myth-making process which imparts to man cosmic awareness. In this regard Cocteau writes: "La poésie est une langue à part que le moi nocturne parle et nous dicte."<sup>1</sup>

As "sensibilité" was the undercurrent of Classicism, so was mysticism the undercurrent of Catholicism during the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Men like Eckhart, Boehme, and San Juan de la Cruz preserved to a certain extent in their writings the primitive myth-

---

1. André Fraigneau, *Cocteau par lui-même* (Paris, 1957), p. 144.

making process. By some unexplained miracle these men insulated themselves against the intellectualizing tendencies of the times and succeeded in living and writing by intuition. Especially, do the writings of Boehme reflect the archetypal phenomenology of ancient myth. It would exceed the scope of our objectives to enter into a detailed discussion of Boehme's highly complex and oftentimes ambiguous gnosticism. We shall attempt to stress only those phases of it which have a bearing upon Maeterlinck's dramaturgy. Boehme is above all obsessed by the antinomy of light and shadow. The anteterrestrial state of things was all pervasive darkness. Light emerged from the womb of darkness. Here in what Boehme refers to as the "Ungrund" or "Tindeterminée" is the source of human liberty.<sup>2</sup> The "Ungrund" represents the "irrational principle" of man which antedates the emergence of intellect. Within the "Ungrund" was absolute liberty. Light, inherent in the "ténèbres" became intellect and man was at once a diurnal and nocturnal being. Out of his diurnal side developed the intellect which categorized visual phenomena and superimposed an order upon the chaos of nature. A social order was also imposed upon mankind but the "Ungrund" or "liberty" remains in the depths of being or the "abyss of the soul" in spite of the civilizing process or primacy of light down through the ages. The nocturnal area of man's psyche is where the ego-archetype of twentieth century man resides. The din of the diurnal world renders contact with it impossible. Only in the dream life and in rêverie does one sometimes have flashes of insight into the primordial self. This "abyss of the soul" wherein lies the elemental phenomenology of primitive man is precisely the goal of modern psychology. "La psychologie et la psychopathologie modernes découvrent scientifiquement l'Ungrund dans l'âme humaine et le nomment l'Inconscient."<sup>3</sup> Nicolas Berdiaeff also points out that "Boehme ramène la métaphysique aux sources de la conscience mythologique de l'humanité."<sup>4</sup> The tragedy grew out of the polar tension between the sub-psychic world of darkness and the artificial, refined world of light.

In his "Static Drama," and above all in *Pelléas et Mélisande*, Maeterlinck reproduces within a dramatic framework Boehme's "Ungrund." It is known that Maeterlinck concerned himself extensively with mysticism, especially as a young man. He translated *L'Ornement des Noces spirituelles* by Ruysbroeck l'Admirable<sup>5</sup> in 1891, just one year before the publication of *Pelléas et Mélisande*. Educated by the Jesuits, Maeterlinck developed a healthy dislike for the subtle intel-

2. Jacob Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum* (Paris, 1945), p. 338.

3. Nicholas Berdiaeff, Introduction to *Mysterium Magnum*, p. 28.

4. *Ibid.*

5. (Bruxelles, 1891.)

lectualism of his mentors. The mystical strain in his temperament, whatever its nature, must have been of sturdy stuff to withstand the effects of the methodical intellectual discipline to which he was exposed as a schoolboy.

Maeterlinck's first play, *La Princesse Maleine*, was presented at the *Théâtre de l'Oeuvre* in 1889. It was this play that elicited the now famous praise of Octave Mirbeau who made no reservation about comparing Maeterlinck with Shakespeare. Certainly, nothing of its kind had ever been seen before on the French stage, especially at a time when the declamatory dramatization of social reality was the order of the day. The contemporary drawing room was replaced by the saturnine atmosphere of a medieval forest; characters harassed by economic and legal injustices were replaced by curious beings whose problems had nothing in common with the prosaic concerns of everyday life; stage action or plot was removed from the level of worldly concerns and reset within a mystic realm. It is a realm wherein psychic and exterior phenomena are blended. These ethereal creatures are hypersensitive to the slightest movement in nature. Falling stars, the rustling of branches, the shimmering shadows on the wall of a dark room, the mute thud of leaves falling to the ground, the pale reflections of moonlight in a pool, all these phenomena and many more comprise a "végétation de symboles" for the Maeterlinckian personage. Here, the Belgian dramatist achieves not only the conventional theatrical dialogue, but an interior dialogue as well. If one does not agree with Mirbeau that Maeterlinck is a greater dramatist than Shakespeare, it is difficult not to concede that Maeterlinck, more completely and more effectively than any predecessor, adapted to the stage the phenomenology of primitive man. The whole atmosphere takes on an oneiric quality. The spectator must sever himself from the intellect in order to establish any sort of empathy with the proceedings. He must allow himself to be mesmerized by the mystery of this dreamworld. His complete absorption therein would facilitate that same loss of identity experienced by the ancient Greeks when they viewed the cosmological history of the race through the medium of flesh-and-blood characters. Little wonder that Mirbeau lavished such disproportionate praise upon this, Maeterlinck's initial stage effort. Though he did not mention the fact in his review, perhaps he sensed the inauguration of a new era of tragedy.

Few have seen in Maeterlinck's early drama an attempt to reproduce the phenomenology of the subconscious. Since the myth-making process, necessary to the development of tragedy and so natural to the primitive mind, remains vestigially in the dream life, one must therefore seek out the ritualistic raw material of tragedy at its natural

source rather than in ethnic history. Maeterlinck, in his radical departure from conventional stage concepts, prepared the way for a genuine tragedy of the twentieth century.

According to Berdiaeff's commentary on Boehme, what is now considered the subconscious might well have been, in the case of primitive man, much closer to the surface mind. The Belgian dramatist is trying to bring us closer to the "ténébreuse et profonde unité" wherein psychic awareness had its genesis. His most successful attempt to accomplish this is in Act III, Scene II, of *Pelléas et Mélisande*, the "underground" scene. Golaud, who has just surprised Pelléas embracing the blond tresses of Mélisande, leads his younger brother into the subterranean passages beneath the castle. It is, of course, pitch dark therein and one must beware of abysses and dangerous escarpments. At one point the spectator senses the moral struggle within Golaud as he comes near to pushing Pelléas into a deep crevice. The atmosphere of the entire play is slung between the poles of light and shadow. Boehme's light which emerges from the womb of darkness is frequently symbolized by the moon's rays suddenly shedding light upon the entrance of a cavern or by the contrasting light and shadow caused by the shaky movement of a lantern in a subterranean passage. In the "underground" scene the unfathomable abyss of man's primitive phenomenology is made concrete by the murky gloom of the foundations under the castle. Here is projected dramatically into an exterior materialization the cavernous area of man's subconscious. If the castle is founded upon an unstable terrain full of stagnant pools and "d'étranges lézardes," so does the entire edifice of the intellect rest upon a dangerous fault that separates it precariously from the chaotic undersoil of the subconscious. In evaluating this scene phenomenologically one must constantly bear in mind that *Pelléas et Mélisande* represents one of the few dramatic expressions of the Symbolist movement, a movement which, above all, challenges the primacy of the intellect. With this play Maeterlinck himself descends from the tower of the castle into its "cave," i.e. he abandons intellect and penetrates the unconscious by making a clean break with the conventional perception of the naturalist stage. This scene is one of complete oneirism. Pelléas and Golaud are at once exploring the favorite haunts of their childhood. They are also restored to the psychic primitivity of the race. Darkness and the dank, fathomless "grottes" suggest the crepuscular character of primitive perceptive processes. "Quand on va au bout des labyrinthes du sommeil, quand on touche aux régions du sommeil profond, on connaît peut-être des repos anté-humains"<sup>6</sup> writes Gaston Bachelard. In this brief scene even duration becomes

6. *La Poétique de l'Espace* (Paris, 1958), p. 29.

more an oneiric than a spatial phenomenon. The two brothers are reduced to the subconscious time atmosphere of Bergson. Upon leaving the "cave," Pelléas expresses surprise concerning the amount of time they had spent in the underground. Taking a more clinical view of the proceedings, one is tempted to read into the scene a Maeterlinckian protest against the neglect of the sub-surface self, the ego stripped of its social garb. Turning his lantern upon the rough contours of the narrow passageways, Golaud says: "Il y a ici un travail caché qu'on ne soupçonne pas, et tout le château s'engloutira une de ces nuits, si l'on n'y prend pas garde. Mais que voulez-vous? personne n'aime à descendre jusqu'ici."<sup>7</sup> Western civilization has, perhaps ever since the Renaissance, ignored the archaeology of the subconscious wherein lies the secret of psychic equilibrium. As a result, like the castle in "*Pelléas*," the intellectualism of our era finds itself resting upon insecure foundations. Within those foundations lies greater self-knowledge, but as Golaud puts it: "Personne ne veut descendre jusqu'ici." In another speech Golaud says almost prophetically: "Il serait temps d'ailleurs d'examiner ces souterrains." Indeed, Freud, Jung, Wundt, Adler, etc., have explored them but Maeterlinck was the first since the Christian mystics to intuit their existence.

The genuine tragedy of the twentieth century (and a nation without an indigenous tragedy is like a rudderless boat) is not directly that of social, economic, or even moral frustration, but rather that of psychic superficiality. This is hardly the place to discuss the ever-increasing rate of mental illness. Suffice it to say that the Greeks doubtlessly enjoyed greater stability because they neither neglected nor suppressed their demons. Catharsis must certainly have included complete oblivion to exterior reality. When the spell was broken, one awoke fresh and ready to confront conscious life again. For a few hours the dream atmosphere of Aeschylus or Sophocles completely absorbed the Greek citizen and restored him to the collective subconscious phenomenology of his ancestry from which he was reborn. During this brief death he had communed with his own demons, the demons of the race; he had descended, Orpheus-like, into the soul's abyss and perceived and understood the light-shadow character of man's basic nature. This was the way of self-knowledge. Modern man, treading as he does upon the top layer of his conscious self, lacks such an opportunity to sound the caverns of his deeper being. Since man has no longer any contact with his inner demons, they sometimes take a fearful vengeance. Maeterlinck's achievement seems especially noteworthy in the light of C. G. Jung's remarks about the German fairy tale, which also derives from the raw material of tragedy:

7. Maurice Maeterlinck, *Théâtre* (Bruxelles, 1908), II.

On the other hand the fairy tale makes it clear that it is possible for a man to reach wholeness, to become the total man, only with the cooperation of the spirit of darkness, indeed that the latter is actually a "causa instrumentalis" of redemption and individuation. In utter perversion of this goal of spiritual development, to which all nature aspires and which is also prefigured in Christian doctrine, National Socialism destroyed man's moral autonomy and set up the nonsensical totalitarianism of the State. The fairy tale tells us how to proceed if we want to overcome the power of darkness: we must turn his own weapons against him, which naturally can not be done if the magical underworld of the hunter remains unconscious, and if the best men in the nation would rather preach dogmatisms and platitudes than take the human soul seriously.<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, Maeterlinck conducts the spectator into the "magical underworld" of the unconscious. At the first performance of "*Pelléas*" by the *Théâtre de l'Oeuvre* even the carnality of the characters was strained out through the gauze curtain behind which the dreamlike action took place. With priority given to shadow and with Debussy's musical accompaniment, the operatic version re-creates the atmosphere of the primal state of existence in which the Word, if not at once an intrusion upon the cosmic silence, is in any case divorced from its petrified, everyday connotation. Maeterlinck is here making one of the first dramatic attempts to capture the symbolic language of the subconscious. Just as in Greek tragedy a barrier is erected against consciousness by the chorus, so does the decor of *Pelléas et Mélisande* draw the spectator into an insular area of self-communion. One sees before him shadow figures which, in this state of hypnosis, are represented as projections of the subconscious psyche. Ideally, one descends with *Pelléas* and Golaud into the fetid underground wherein is experienced the same revulsion before the odors that emanate from the "grottes" and the same apprehension concerning the instability of the labyrinth that undergirds the castle. One reverts momentarily to the phenomenology of the child who, when going down the cellar stairs, might imagine he sees all sorts of mysterious crawling creatures. We have already cited the fact that Bachelard relates the "cave" to the subconscious and we are convinced that Maeterlinck achieves a materialization of it in his dramaturgy. If this be so, the Belgian dramatist deserves much greater consideration as regards his role in the providing of a fertile soil for the development of a genuine tragedy of the twentieth century. Cocteau seems to be the only dramatist who has followed his lead thus far, in his films as well as his plays. Indeed, it is possible Maeterlinck's dramatic ideas already have reached and will reach greater fulfillment through the medium of the cinema. But this is a study in itself.

8. C. G. Jung, *Psyche and Symbol* (New York, 1958), p. 110.

## BENAVENTE ON SHAKESPEAREAN CHARACTERS

BENAVENTE, INFLUENCED by Shakespeare in many of his dramas,<sup>1</sup> has also written extensively on various Shakespearean problems such as acting, staging, and the like.<sup>2</sup> Benavente fancied himself an expert on all matters pertaining to Shakespeare. He quotes constantly and often dogmatically from Shakespearean texts: "The rest is silence. This does not signify the remainder as many translators of Shakespeare have understood it; the rest means . . . repose which meaning it still has in English and it was so used almost exclusively in the time of Shakespeare."<sup>3</sup> Even numerology interested him. He commented that Shakespeare's birth date, 1564, has digits totaling 16. Twice sixteen equals 1616, the date of Shakespeare's death, which fact impressed Benavente greatly to judge by the number of times he refers to it (*O.C.*, XI, 174; *O.C.*, XI, 70; *O.C.*, XI, 297; *O.C.*, IX, 697).

When Benavente visited Stratford on Avon, he found the general atmosphere congenial and full of "the spirit of sweet Shakespeare" (*O.C.*, IX, 700), but he was shocked to discover that most Englishmen knew Shakespeare only superficially and then only the most popular works. He distrusted English admiration for Shakespeare as dogmatic, cold, and insincere and felt that the Shakespearean spirit was neither very English nor very Protestant (*O.C.*, IX, 1028).

As a playwright, much of Benavente's interest focused on Shakespearean characters, who, he felt, given their point of view, behaved acceptably and were properly motivated. In *The Merchant of Venice* the only one right was Shylock. All deceived him, stole from him, or mistreated him. Shylock had to be a villain, but Shakespeare gave him life and so must have pitied him. His works are full of traitors and human perfidy, but even Iago's conduct Shakespeare seems at times to justify. Indeed, the most cogent expressions of free will are made by his villains (*O.C.*, XI, 259).

*King Lear*, the work Benavente's father was reading when he died (*O.C.*, XI, 566-567), was Benavente's favorite play. He was impressed by Lear's great spiritual implications. Dispossessed of his kingdom, deserted by his courtiers and servants, and punished by the ingrati-

1. Kessel Schwartz, "Benavente and Shakespearian Drama," *S-CMLA Bulletin* (Spring, 1961).

2. Kessel Schwartz, "Benavente and Shakespearian Drama," *Romance Notes*, I, No. 2 (Spring, 1960).

3. Jacinto Benavente, *Obras Completas* (Madrid, Aguilar, 1950-1958), XI, p. 488. Citations from Benavente are to this edition.

tude of his older daughters, Lear pays for his inability to appreciate the rectitude of the youngest, Cordelia, who is truth and kindness personified. We all pity the kind and unfortunate father and do not forgive the daughters when they cast him out. Yet, it is not Shakespeare who is the avenger. Shakespearean justice is impartial. Death and tragedy are the same for all. His characters, good and bad, fall victims to the same brutal destiny, leaving to the spectator the duty of moralizing their position. In the spectator's role, Benavente finds the ingratitude of the older daughters just, because the King unjustly divided his kingdom (*O.C.*, VII, 68).

Benavente read *Hamlet* countless times in the original, in a Moratín Spanish translation and in a French translation by Victor Hugo's son. In addition to stressing constantly the necessity for a young Hamlet and the twisting of dates and facts by Shakespeare to accommodate his friend, Burbage, Benavente attempts to refute the possible homosexuality of Hamlet. It would be easy to maintain that Hamlet was homosexual in his love for his father, hatred of his mother, and in his discussions with his friend, Horatio, and others, but Benavente denies it as well as any potentiality on Hamlet's part of Oedipal love for his mother (*O.C.*, XI, 338).

Hamlet's attempt to decipher the meaning of life and reality intrigues Benavente. To test the king, Hamlet will put on the play, for "The play's the thing," and he analyzes the various motivations which cause Hamlet to recast the story. Hamlet, insofar as his speeches are concerned, has a passive role and is a spectator rather than an actor. He was not born as was Oedipus to fulfill his destiny and never had to confront it or defy it. He was curious about life, but he was not eager to take part in it. Benavente also takes exception to Moratín's translation of the phrase in Hamlet's soliloquy, "to be or not to be," as "to exist or not to exist." For Benavente the phrase means to create or not to create one's essence (*O.C.*, XI, 328).

Benavente has written much on Shakespeare's feminine characters. Ophelia was the victim of Hamlet's filial relationship, as his mother's fragility caused him to doubt the virtue of all women. Ophelia's madness was caused, not by her father's death, but because it was the man she loved, Hamlet, who had killed him. Unable to keep from loving, she sought escape, first in an innocent childhood and later in the more permanent form of death. Juliet, unlike Ophelia, ran to meet love. Curious, almost childlike, she lost her soul to love and, at last, willingly drank the potion. When Romeo died she too accepted death, a more faithful ally of love than life itself, for it is through death that love triumphs over hate.

Desdemona loved enthusiastically and emotionally. Had Othello

been vain instead of noble, he might not have doubted her great love which became the very proof of her treachery. Calumny triumphed over simple innocence when her own nobility and heroism caused her destruction. Portia, happy and lucky, also aroused her husband's jealousy, but she dissipated it with her laughter. Had Desdemona known laughter she, too, might have averted tragedy. Beatrice challenged dangerous love to frighten it away. Her intelligence made it difficult for her to realize that a woman in love should be a bit deceived and should reject irony and anticipate attack.

Lady Macbeth, in her wifely ambition, dreamed of a throne for her husband. She was both Eve and the serpent at the same time, both temptation and seduction. She died before she could see the fall of the throne in which her ambition and her love were fused. Cleopatra, however, the eternal woman, wanted to rule the world to show what her womanly charms might accomplish. To lose or win—and many lost and won for her: Pompey, Caesar, Marc Antony—was a game of chance, and the outcome not of great import as long as she was set at more value than anything else which might be lost. Her glory lay in the certainty of her dominion over man, for this was the empire she craved. Tears and laughter, caresses and cruelties, carried Marc Antony to his doom, and when she failed with Octavius, there remained for her only the final seduction of death (*O.C.*, VII, 108). Benavente believed Shakespeare's women characters complemented the men and created what he called, "force and repose; turbulence and serenity; rough and smooth . . . masculine and feminine" (*O.C.*, VII, 116).

In the final analysis, Benavente says, various attempts to prove that Shakespeare's works were written by Lord Bacon, Lord Rutland, the Counts of Southampton, of Stanley, of Pembroke, or of Oxford are unimportant. All the critics fail in not recognizing that Shakespeare, more than any other author, left the secret of his soul. Critics are men of books and not of souls and so have succeeded merely in obscuring the Shakespeare, who, as Wordsworth claimed, opened his heart for us (*O.C.*, XI, 716).

KESSEL SCHWARTZ

# THE PRELATE AND THE PACHYDERM: REAR GUARD AND VANGUARD DRAMA IN THE FRENCH THEATER

## 1

IT HAS BEEN CUSTOMARY to divide the theaters of Paris into three groups. The Boulevard traditionally produces fluffy plays of pure entertainment, and is primarily interested in commercial success. A second group includes the subsidized theaters, the Comédie Française and the Théâtre National Populaire, devoted to the dramatic classics, both ancient and modern. The last group produces serious plays by modern authors, either in the philosophical, poetic, or avant-garde vein. It is sometimes called the avant-garde theater, sometimes the literary.

Such a division today is highly artificial, for the large plush theaters of the Boulevards have frequently forgotten commercialism and turned to the plays of serious thinkers like Sartre or Camus, while the Comédie Française has sometimes been led astray into the facile fields of frothy and insubstantial commercial comedy. Moreover, since the reforms effected by André Malraux a year or so ago, the purposes of the subsidized theaters have been more clearly defined, and through the experimental theaters placed under the direction of Jean-Louis Barrault and Jean Vilar, a helping hand has been extended to young writers exploring new ways of dramatic expression.

It would seem realistic to forget the antiquated grouping by theaters and concentrate instead upon the works themselves. The plays being written in Paris today fall generally into two groups: those of the Rear Guard, based upon traditional concepts of dramaturgy, and those of the Vanguard, experimental in nature. The first are more or less in the realistic vein, reminding us that the influence of Antoine and the Théâtre Libre, after sixty years, is still strong in France. The characters are credible, the plot "well-made," containing the usual elements of exposition, inciting moment, climax, etc.; and the theme is, if not obvious, at least clear, so that no one need leave the theater mystified.

One of Ionesco's characters, thinking of the theater, remarks, "There's nothing new under the sun. Even when there is no sun."

Perhaps in an effort to remedy this, the avant-garde writers have set out to find new ways of expressing their ideas, to invent a *form* which will correspond more faithfully to the vision expressed in their plays. These authors have a new concept of character which is not based upon psychology, a new concept of plot which is no longer concerned with events progressing through a crisis to a *dénouement*, and a new attitude towards language which is thought of not so much as a means of communication as a medium for revealing man's solitude. Dramatists like Beckett and Ionesco are serious writers who are not seeking newness for newness' sake. Their innovations spring from a wish to express feelings which are widespread today: those of man uprooted, man lost, man disintegrating in an absurd universe. For this reason, critics have called their plays "metaphysical farces," and "cosmological comedies."

The 1959-1960 season in Paris was rich in works expressing both Rear Guard and Vanguard tendencies. Two of the most solidly established of French dramatists were represented: Jean-Paul Sartre by *The Solitaires of Altona*, his first play in many years, and Jean Anouilh by *Becket or the Honor of God*, bringing to a total of three the plays of Anouilh which could be seen in Paris last season. The avant-garde was represented by three works of dramatists who are threatening to become classics of the experimental theater: Audiberti's *Glapion Effect*, Jean Genet's *The Blacks*, and Ionesco's *Rhinoceros*.

## 2

I think that we may consider Jean Anouilh as representative of what I have called, without pejorative intent, the Rear Guard dramatists; and Ionesco is surely one of the most disconcerting of the writers of the Vanguard. Yet, when one compares *Rhinoceros* with Anouilh's play about Thomas à Beckett, despite a disparity of method, one becomes aware of a certain common ground shared by serious writers of both "Guards."

Since 1947 Anouilh has been painting a picture of the mediocre world of people who have accepted the compromises of life, those who, unlike his heroic Antigone, have said yes to happiness, and continue their shallow existence devoted for the most part to sex and other pleasures which money can buy. The heroism of earlier characters is only a faint echo in their memory, or the disappointed idealism of youth is perverted into an embittered anti-heroism which seeks compromise with a vengeance. In *Becket or the Honor of God*, Anouilh returns to his intransigent race and shows us once again the dignity of man true to himself. Underlying the play is the usual Anouilhian conflict between absolute values and temporal ones, in this case the

struggle between Caesar and Christ, the honor of God versus the honor of the King.

Act I, in the traditional manner, establishes the situation. Becket, rechristened a Saxon in order to conform to the personal mythology of Anouilh whose heroes usually rise from the lower strata of society, has become the boon companion of King Henry, and together they frequent winepots, wenches, and council chamber. Becket is characterized as kind and generous, courageous and independent, with a strong sense of responsibility, contrasting with the King's weakness, brutality, and total dependence upon his friend's decisions. When Henry names Becket Chancellor, he is only giving official recognition to a situation that has existed for a considerable time. But Becket is absent—his actions resemble those of a somnambulist, for he is play-acting the part of playboy and statesman while waiting to discover what his real role in life will be. "As long as Becket must improvise his honor," he tells the sleeping King, "he will serve you. And if some day, he finds it. . . . But where is Becket's honor?" With this pathetic and suggestive question the first act ends. It both sums up the exposition, stressing the theme of honor which has been solidly posed as the central theme of the play, and looks forward to later events.

In the second act the situation is complicated. In order to offset the danger represented by the English clergy, the King has decided to appoint his friend to the newly vacated post of Archbishop of Canterbury. Becket as Chancellor had seconded the King against the rebellious bishops, but once appointed Archbishop, he tells Henry, "I cannot serve both God and you." And Becket's renunciation of his former life is complete: like the earlier heroes and heroines of Anouilh, he cannot tolerate half-way measures. He sells his clothes, and gives his money to the poor. But this seems too simple: "a true saint wouldn't have done all this in one day." He is enjoying his role too much, and begins to question his motives.

By the end of the second act, Caesar and Christ are prepared for battle. In the third and fourth, the battle is fought out and the problem resolved. Throughout the play Becket's incorruptibility is contrasted to the hypocrisy of bishops, kings, and Pope. While all the rest stand for some human variety of honor, or an ideal which may be compromised because appearance is more important than spirit, Becket represents God's honor, which is timeless and may never be compromised.

I was a debauchee [he admits to his clergy], perhaps a libertine, a man of this world in any case. I loved living, and I made fun of all this. But then this load shouldn't have been placed upon me. It's been given to me now, I've rolled up my sleeves and no one can ever make me let go.

It becomes obvious that Becket is a more mature and positive hero than his earlier counterparts. Compared with him, Antigone is inhuman, motivated by an ideal so abstract that it is inexpressible. Becket's revolt is grounded in a recognizable ideal: that of God's honor, and he stands for the "unwritten law which always finally bends the heads of kings." That same unwritten law which gives Sophocles' heroine such strength and authority. Becket's revolt does not take place in a vacuum, and it is symptomatic of his lucidity that he admits one must fight Caesar with Caesar's arms. No one, I think, would be tempted to accuse Becket of the petulantly childish behavior which has been imputed to Antigone.

Becket in exile finds refuge at the French court, and then in a monastery. But once again the game of penance and prayer is too easy, and he flees back to England where he may play his real role as shepherd to a flock too long neglected. Before he returns, however, an encounter between the two divided friends takes place on a wind-swept plain of Normandy. This is the central *agon* of the play, and corresponds to that moving scene of *Antigone* where the young heroine of the absolute encounters Creon, hero of more human values. The honor of the King, the expedient, the temporal, cannot be reconciled with the honor of God, the transcendent, the absolute. The conversation is one of deaf-mutes, for neither can speak nor understand the language of the other. Despite their mutual sympathy, despite the King's love for his former friend, each must play the role assigned to him by some absurd destiny. "I'm not here to convince you," says the Prelate, and like Antigone he adds, "I'm only here to say no." Becket, entrusted with God's honor, which he describes as the honor of a weak child king, now feels that he has found his real role in life. In spite of an empty heaven (for Becket is by no means a man of strong faith, and he never claims he loves God, but only God's honor), he assumes his role and becomes consciously what he must become.

Becket dies crying out, "How difficult you make everything and how heavy is your honor!" And the play ends on a bitterly disillusioned note as King Henry, in need of Saxon political support, comes to Canterbury to undergo penance: "The honor of God, gentlemen, is a good thing, and all in all it's an advantage to have it on our side."

*Becket or the Honor of God* reveals Anouilh's flawless craftsmanship. Its structure is sure, catching us up from the opening speech of King Henry, with its tone of familiarity, tinged with irony so typical of Anouilh, and holding us to the end with what one might call brilliant dialogue if it were not so perfectly suited to the characters and the climate of the play. Passing with effortless ease from exposition to complication, to climax and resolution, the dramatist moves

us and entertains us by his manipulation of characters who seem human enough, placed in situations which are dramatic and suggestive. Our tendency to identify with them is supported by a modernity of tone which is belied by the quaint charm of the settings. War, collaboration, family quarrels, and the summit conference atmosphere of Henry's final meeting with Becket, all serve to remind the audience that man remains essentially the same.

Anouilh has not simply taken over the outworn forms of the Naturalist drama; he has renewed that tradition at the same time that he remains essentially faithful to it. His early plays, *The Ermine*, or *Restless Heart*, for example, as far as form and technique were concerned, might have been written by any first rate dramatist of the realist persuasion. As he develops, Anouilh tends to mingle the fanciful (exemplified by the *Rose Plays*) with the real (exemplified by the *Black Plays*), and his latest works have been based upon a realistic appraisal of life corrected, sometimes more, sometimes less, by a rather lucid poetic fancy which makes us aware at times that we are in the theater rather than in a live situation. In *Becket* this fanciful element has been reduced to a minimum, and is reflected above all in the staging of the play. (Anouilh, it may be recalled, was one of the directors of the Paris production.) As the drama progresses, stylized sets are raised and dropped from the flies, suggesting cathedral pillars or bare tree trunks as the scene requires; platforms or curtains are pushed on, or drawn off, from the wings; and when Henry and Becket meet upon the plains, they are on horseback: each within a horse constructed of papier-mâché, handsomely caparisoned, and highly reminiscent of pieces in a chess game. Such scenic coquetry adds to the medieval feeling of the play, giving it the visual charm of an illuminated manuscript, and in no wise detracting from the fundamental realism of the characters, plot, and treatment.

## 3

Ionesco's theater by contrast is nonrealistic. Or rather it is realistic in a different way, for Ionesco has stressed many times the profound realism of his vision which is preoccupied not with surfaces, but with an inner world. Through a faithful representation of his personal world, he believes he can achieve a certain degree of universality, for all our deepest needs are the same, and our basic fears and joys do not differ from those of other men. The major ingredient of this vision is a feeling of evanescence, short-lived and inevitably overcome by one of heaviness and opacity, as the human, spiritual elements are conquered by the inhuman, purely physical. This is represented in a variety of ways, on the levels of plot, character, spectacle, and language.

"This theatre," Ionesco claims, "progresses not through a predetermined subject and plot, but through an increasingly intense and revealing series of emotional states." Such a formula applies particularly to Ionesco's early one-act plays, *The Bald Soprano* (1949), *The Lesson* (1950), etc., which present us with a simple situation pushed to a state of paroxysm. Although his latest plays, *The Killer* (1957) and *Rhinoceros* (1958), also progress from a state of calm to one of extreme tension and violent emotion, their greater complexity is organized about a central theme, and a more or less traditional plot-line.

*Rhinoceros* opens on a Sunday morning in the quiet central square of a small French city. Seated at a sidewalk café, the gently bohemian Béranger is reproved by his immensely superior and condescending friend, Jean, for his nonconformist behavior. Their conversation is interrupted by the deafening noise of a rhinoceros which goes thundering past in a nearby street. The townspeople are excited and upset by the inexplicable appearance of a pachyderm in their city. Some time later a second rhinoceros roars by, and a vehement discussion ensues in an effort to determine whether the same animal has gone by twice, or whether there are two rhinoceros.

In the second act, the situation becomes more complicated and grotesque as an element of fantasy is grafted onto the parody of life's little scene we have already witnessed in the town square of Act I. In the law publishing office where Béranger works, the harassed director is upset because Monsieur Boeuf has not shown up for work. His wife arrives—out of breath, for she has been chased down the street by a rhinoceros—to explain that M. Boeuf is out of town and sick. Soon, however, we discover that the real reason for his absence is that he has become a rhinoceros and is standing below the office bellowing for his mate. Leaving her skirt in the hands of the surprised Béranger who had attempted to hold her back, Mme. Boeuf leaps onto the back of her pachyderm husband and rides off like a victorious Valkyrie. It becomes apparent that M. Boeuf is not the only person who has turned into a rhinoceros, and when Béranger goes to visit his friend Jean, we see the latter metamorphosed before our very eyes: each time that he goes to the bathroom to get a drink of water or cool off, he comes out greener than before, and with the bump on his forehead a bit longer. At home, in Act III, Béranger and his girl friend Daisy are determined to resist. In spite of the droves of rhinoceros running past in the streets, they will remain human. Rhino heads peer in the windows and rise up from the orchestra pit, and soon Daisy begins to feel that after all the rhinoceros way of life is the natural one—and she slips off to join them in the streets. The

radio station has been taken over, the telephone system; everyone but Béranger has become a rhinoceros. In a world where there are no more human beings, he wonders whether he is not a monster. And indeed, as the play ends with Béranger's claim that he will not capitulate, the rhino heads peering in the windows have become stylized and beautiful, and their bellowing has become almost melodic.

The meaning of the play is clear: man is only too inclined to forget his humanity, his individuality and independence; following the pressure of the times, he becomes like everyone else. The rhinoceros are an amusing—and at the same time frightening—symbol of man giving in to his animal nature. The play was first performed in November, 1959, at Düsseldorf, where the audience applauded every reference which could be applied to that mass hypnotism which resulted in Nazism. The overwhelming accumulation of inanimate objects which, in earlier Ionesco plays, had buried the characters in their midst, or driven them off the stage, is here replaced by the thick green flesh of brute force which turns a city of men into a chaotic zoo.

The pathetic Béranger, one of the few human characters in Ionesco's theater, is unique in his resistance. He alone develops from an indifferent and apathetic individual into a pitiful hero convinced that he must do something to stop the progress of the horrifying epidemic. The mechanism of the other characters is stressed by their use of cliché and repetition. When the rhinoceros first appears, they cry out, one after the other, "Oh! A rhinoceros!" as they pop in and out of doors and windows like characters in a Punch and Judy show. Ionesco singles out for special treatment the logician, that specialist of methodical thought which has frozen into a pattern leaving no room for the irrational.

THE LOGICIAN: Here is a perfect syllogism. Cats have four paws. Isidora and Fricot have each four paws. Therefore Isidora and Fricot are cats.

THE OLD GENTLEMAN: My dog also has four paws.

THE LOGICIAN: Then he's a cat.

With irrevocable logic, the Logician imposes his own beliefs and pre-figures by his intellectual dictatorship the terrifying totalitarianism represented by the rhinoceros.

In a brilliant scene, Ionesco suggests the breakdown of communication: Jean and Béranger seated at a table are discussing the latter's serious problems in adapting to life; nearby the Logician and his friend are talking of logic and syllogisms. Before long, the two conversations begin to resemble each other to such an extent that questions and replies are interchangeable. How can we trust a language

in which the same words can serve indiscriminately for the most serious of discussions and the most trivial?

Some critics would dismiss Ionesco as a clever contriver of theatrical effects. But he is much more than this, for his theatrical techniques derive from his particular view of the world, and his treatment of character, plot, language, and spectacle suggests the disintegration of man and human values in an absurd universe.

In *Rhinoceros* the plot-line runs from the calm parody of realism in the exposition to the frenetic climax of a world turned rhinoceros. But there is no resolution, and we are left at the end with the unhappy feeling that there is no answer to Béranger's dilemma. Here Ionesco differs, as in most of his plays, from traditional dramaturgy. Despite the disillusionment at the end of *Becket*, we feel that after the struggle a certain calm has been reached, and that real life is after all made up of compromise rather than heroism. In Ionesco's plays the plot often ends with the climax, for after that nothing is possible.

4

The major differences between *Becket* and *Rhinoceros*, it seems to me, are those of aesthetic style, language, and degree of directness. Both plays take their point of departure from something resembling realism. But whereas Anouilh's play remains close to reality, Ionesco's quickly leaves it behind. Against a parody of reality he introduces the fantastic element of the rhinoceros which perhaps becomes all the more terrifying because of the banal climate in which it appears. Anouilh's flights have never taken him so deep into fantasy.

On the other hand, Anouilh's language is more figured, more vigorous and varied than that of Ionesco. The dialogue is realistic, and the metaphors used are most often drawn from everyday situations, but the language takes on a literary dimension because the dramatist has skilfully chosen the word with the right color and emotional connotations. Besides, he is working with a vocabulary which is largely that of the personal mythology he has created in his thirty years of playwriting. Ionesco's language clings to the ground; it has the flatness and banality of everyday conversation. Such a style is of course intentional and betrays man's shallowness and triviality. It is typical of a certain group of Vanguard dramatists, particularly Beckett, Ionesco and Adamov; but there are significant differences: Beckett, for example, uses words like a poet, and his dialogue is at once more stark and more suggestive than that of either Ionesco or Adamov.

Both Anouilh and Ionesco clearly have something to say, but Anouilh is more direct. Without ever adopting the tone of a moralizer, he makes clear his basic themes, and I think there is no doubt

with which characters his sympathies lie. Through the entire complex of the play, but aided by the characters and their speeches, he establishes his point of view. Ionesco, on the other hand, makes his points indirectly. It is the total play which conveys the meaning. Characters are used in a satirical manner, but it is the performed play, including the language *per se* and the visible elements, which carries the weight of Ionesco's meaning. One cannot point to any particular speeches which are a direct expression of the author's bias. An unsympathetic and imperceptive public might, in fact, miss the point of *Rhinoceros* and dismiss it as simply foolish. Actually, its point is very similar to that of *Becket*, for both dramatists are preoccupied with the man who insists upon remaining true to the best in himself, in a world where compromise and apathy are the rule. Anouilh's Prelate is a more resolute brother to Ionesco's Béranger, and each in his own place, in his own century, must resist the brutal onslaught of the unthinking pachyderms.

Despite a great difference in form, both Anouilh and Ionesco are dealing with reality in ways which make us aware of our situation rather than allowing us to escape it. Each has found a highly personal way of expressing his views. Anouilh has accepted the traditional framework of the realistic drama, and renewing that frame, has created a personal mythology which speaks eloquently and dramatically to us of many problems which preoccupy us today. Ionesco, following the outrageous examples of Jarry and the surrealists, is giving us a theater which is delightfully original and reflects the absurdity which looms so large in contemporary thought.

Neither writer claims to have found the only possible dramatic formula. The established success of Anouilh, and the ever-growing popularity of Ionesco's supposedly difficult plays, only help to prove that in the theater there are no iron-clad rules. There are many ways of holding the mirror up to nature.

LEONARD C. PRONKO

# THE VULTURES: BECQUE'S REALISTIC COMEDY OF MANNERS

HENRY BECQUE'S *THE VULTURES*, although important in the early development of modern realism, seems to be, for the most part, a forgotten play, or at least one that has received little critical attention in America. Its inclusion in John Gassner's, *A Treasury of the Theatre*, in an English translation by Freeman Tilden,<sup>1</sup> however, is likely to make it a familiar play, at least to undergraduate students. It is, perhaps, of value then to examine some of the assumptions made concerning the nature of the play and how well they fit the work as art. In an introduction to the play, Gassner writes of the characters as believing that, "their social conduct and sentiments are norms of the social level on which they live and thrive." He notes that although Becque has employed the slice-of-life technique of the realist, the play does not belong to the naturalistic school of Zola and his other contemporaries in the French theater. Indeed, as Gassner points out, Becque removed himself from Zola's brand of naturalism when he wrote in his own preface to *The Vultures*: "I have never entertained much liking for assassins, hysterical and alcoholic characters, or for the martyrs of heredity and victims of evolution." Becque's intent was to portray reality as he saw it, to be completely faithful to the nature of the language, the thoughts and the actions that the characters would exhibit if they could be seen operating within the real society Becque was mirroring on the stage.

An American critic, Samuel Montefiore Waxman, contends that *The Vultures* is excessively bitter. In his study, *Antoine and the Théâtre-Libre*, Waxman praises Becque's dialogue and characterization, but he says, "And the words of the ravens are cruel, sometimes needlessly cruel. They reflect Becque's black view of life." Waxman holds that this "black view" is a result of Becque's unfortunate financial experiences. He considers the play more as a comment on the defined vultures than as a revelation of the manners of all the characters within their world. By means of this point of view, he is able to find an element to offset Becque's natural pessimism: "The most beautiful

1. *A Treasury Of The Theatre*, ed. by John Gassner (New York, 1959). All references to the play are from this edition.

I am indebted to Mrs. Mathe Allain for aid in translating critical material as well as for making an analytical comparison of certain passages from the French edition of *Les Corbeaux* with the English translation.

sentiment of *Les Corbeaux* is the closeness with which the mother, daughters, and faithful servant cling to each other in their unequal battle with the ravens.”<sup>2</sup>

The play is a slice-of-life, a realistic play. To stop with this analysis, however, is to fall short of the mark, short of Henry Becque’s intent and artistry. *The Vultures* presents a group of characters who are both products and producers of their society. Becque examines their code and their manners by presenting them without commentary. Any condemnation of their behavior is implicit, inferred from the disparity between the characters’ evaluation of themselves and their society and the audience’s opinion of them. In addition to employing these realistic techniques, Becque indirectly assists the audience in forming its opinion by satirizing the characters’ manners with a heavy irony and a grim humor, unlikely to provoke laughter. Becque thus seems to have created a realistic play, in which the techniques of the comedy of manners are used for moralizing purposes.

This blending is substantially intimated in James Huneker’s, *Iconoclasts*. Huneker writes in one instance that “*Les Corbeaux* is unique in modern comedy,” and, later, that “*Les Corbeaux* is the Bible of the dramatic realists.” Huneker also argues, however, that “Molière is his [Becque’s] real master,” and he asks, “Are we returning to the Molière comedy of character?” Huneker’s awareness of Molière’s influence on Becque and his opinion that Becque’s new realism was a modified, a subdued naturalism, makes him see the play as a blending of these two forms. Becque, he concludes, was “nearer classic form” than his contemporaries.<sup>3</sup> The Molière influence on Becque is seen in his plots, which are, as Adolphe Thalasso points out in *Le Théâtre Libre*, “... très simples, très simples aussi ses moyens d’exécution.”<sup>4</sup> It is true that Becque’s plots are very simple and his technique relatively free of complex symbols and mechanical conventions.

The plot of *The Vultures* is extremely simple, and Becque relies only once on a mechanical convention to unfold his drama. The action centers around the Vignerons, a middle-class family of means. Mr. Vigneron is a manufacturer in partnership with a Mr. Teissier. The curtain goes up on a seemingly ideal home as the Vigneron family is preparing a dinner party to celebrate the impending marriage of their youngest daughter, Blanche. Mr. Vigneron leaves as the guests begin to arrive. After the guests have been introduced, and while they are laughing at Gaston Vigneron’s impersonation of his father, an unwelcome guest, a doctor, arrives to announce the sudden and

2. Samuel Montefiore Waxman, *Antoine and The Théâtre-Libre* (Cambridge, Mass., 1926), pp. 41-44.

3. James Huneker, *Iconoclasts* (New York, 1921), pp. 163-81.

4. Adolphe Thalasso, *Le Théâtre Libre* (Paris, 1909), p. 43.

*Character types*

unexpected death of Mr. Vigneron. The next two acts present a procession of "vultures" who attempt to take advantage of Mrs. Vigneron's inability to comprehend the problems of settling her husband's estate. The "vultures" preying on the family are many, but the most rapacious is Teissier, who, with the help of the lawyer, Bourdon, reduces the family to a state of penury. Blanche's wedding is canceled because of her inability to provide the contracted dowry; the family is forced to move to surroundings incongruous with their former social status.

✓ In Act IV, Blanche has drifted into insanity, Gaston has joined the army, and the eldest daughter, Judith, and Mrs. Vigneron cannot resolve their plight. The family is finally saved by Teissier, who develops an interest in the second Vigneron daughter, Marie. The solution of the Vignerons' difficulties is effected by an agreement between Teissier and Marie to form a union admittedly without love, a marriage that is in actuality a business contract. The death of the father brought the "vultures" into action, but it also revealed that in a society where money has superseded moral values, all must be "vultures" if they are to survive.

The first act opens with an idyllic scene of family singing and fun-making. Yet, the untenable basis of the Vigneron world and its moral code is immediately suggested by their concern with propriety and with the place and function of money. In the first conversation between Blanche and her mother, Becque intimates the tenuous source of the Vignerons' standards. Blanche questions whether the placing of a menu at each plate will add anything to the dinner. When Mrs. Vigneron replies that it will not detract from it, Blanche is immediately concerned with the question of its propriety, regardless of the effect. Mrs. Vigneron is "absolutely sure" it is the proper thing to do because she "saw it in the *Ladies' Home Companion*." The satire is immediately aimed at society's subscription to an artificial code. Mrs. Vigneron further admits to being flattered by the prospect of having a "son-in-law from one of the oldest families." It is ironical that she should qualify her pride by adding, "But I wouldn't sacrifice one of my girls to mere vanity," when sacrificing one of her girls is just what she ultimately must do in order to salvage her world. The relative nature of the Vigneron morality is further revealed in the discussion about the witnesses for the wedding. Mr. Vigneron is impressed by his prospective son-in-law's witnesses, "a high government official and a general," because in the Vigneron world, the worth of the individual is determined by his relative position in the social scale.

Blanche is depicted as a romantic, and Becque uses her to expose the shortcomings of the Vigneron society's definition of sexual purity

and of the nature of marriage. Her mother describes Blanche as "a child, as modest and innocent—the dear little girl—as can be." But Blanche's innocence is seen, after the economic collapse of the family, as ironic and, moreover, strangely dependent upon the family's social status. When the probability of her marriage to George de Saint-Genis becomes dubious, she admits to Marie that the marriage must take place because she has already granted her fiancé the privileges of marriage. Becque exposes the economic nature of marriage in a materialistic society in two interviews between Blanche and Mrs. de Saint-Genis, George's mother. Blanche admits her imprudence to Marie after Mrs. de Saint-Genis warns her that the marriage might not take place if the Vignerons' economic status is drastically altered. Blanche, the romantic, continues to believe in the certainty of her marriage to George de Saint-Genis until her second, and final, interview with Mrs. de Saint-Genis. When it becomes obvious that Mrs. de Saint-Genis is likely to succeed in her efforts to prevent the marriage, Blanche suffers the humiliation of admitting her mistake a second time. Her appearance of innocence and naïveté is disproved, but even with her purity negated, her guilt is a matter of question in the light of Mrs. de Saint-Genis' standards. The error of the young lovers offers Mrs. de Saint-Genis a socially acceptable reason for prohibiting the marriage. Yet, Becque makes it clear that, in the eyes of the world, Blanche's real guilt does not arise from her act of passion. The ambiguous relationship between Blanche's guilt and economic stability is established when Mrs. de Saint-Genis tells Blanche, "You see, I do not attach any undue importance to the result of a moment of forgetfulness, justified by your youth, and all the surrounding circumstances. You ought to want your fault to remain a secret; my son is an honorable man who would never betray you. So much said, the next question is: *is it necessary for both of you to sacrifice your whole lives for the sake of a slip?*" (Italics mine.) Blanche's moral guilt is minimized, and the real danger to both of the lovers is the risk of making an economically unwise match. Mrs. de Saint-Genis, angered by Blanche's obstinacy, ends the interview by condemning Blanche as a "fallen woman." However, Blanche's guilt does not lie in her fall from virginity; her guilt is not a moral guilt. The crime of Blanche was to fall from her previous economic status; her guilt lies in the failure of her father to provide for his family in the event of his death and in her inability to fulfill the dowry agreement. Her ensuing breakdown results from her inability to recognize the dichotomy of the two types of guilt, one moral and the other social and amoral, and from her inability to cope with the problems posed by the change in her social position.

Mr. Vigneron defines the position and function of money in his family's world and emphasizes the importance of propriety. In his only reliance on a mechanical convention, Becque has Mrs. Vigneron tell the story of Mr. Vigneron's rise from struggling respectability to upper-middle-class properness. Mr. Vigneron praises Mrs. Vigneron as the ideal businessman's wife, standing by through all the lean years and helping him to enjoy the full ones. He admonishes his children to "measure up to her standard," because she is "a model woman." This creates the question, what are her standards? Ironically, they collapse with the loss of her economically determined position. Becque hints at the hypocrisy of bourgeois social values when he reveals Vigneron's ignorance of music. It is proper to listen to music, but it is not necessary to have a sound knowledge of the subject. The power and place of money in their lives is emphasized again when Vigneron speaks to his family of the future: "Just let the old man put in a few more years to ensure the future of this little family, and then he'll have earned the right to take a rest." In a society based on money, the future can be ensured only by economic gains, and the very "right" to rest is bought, not really earned. Vigneron has no opportunity to know that in the event of such an accident as his death, the same perverted emphasis on money that effected his family's rise will be the cause of his family's downfall.

The family's fall from status affects Judith and Gaston as much as it affects Blanche. Judith is a shy musician who has been led to believe by Merckens, her music teacher, that she possesses real talent. However, when she loses her social position, Merckens ceases flattering her and tells her brutally that her talent is insufficient for a career and that "there are no resources for a woman; or, at least, only one. . . . If you are good, people will respect you without doing anything for you; and if you're not, they'll do things for you without respecting you." Merckens' callousness and the collapse of her hopes to provide a living for her family force Judith to be the first to admit that the family can be saved only if Marie makes the "greatest sacrifice a woman can make" and marries Teissier. Gaston appears at first as a happy-go-lucky youth, bothered only with the problem of how best to entertain himself. He also cannot adjust to his new status and escapes by joining the army. Gaston and Judith, like Blanche, have not been prepared to cope with the reality of their society. Wealth permitted them to see only appearances, the lip service paid to traditional morals and sentimental values. Poverty forces them to realize that they possess neither charm, nor talent, nor position if they do not possess money.

The more obvious "vultures," Bourdon and Teissier, recognize the nature of their society, subscribe to its relative code and utilize the code to maintain their acquired position. To Bourdon, the Lawyers' Club is "meant to be a protection for us—not for the public." The club's standards must benefit those subscribing to them and protect the members in their pursuit of wealth. Standards are no longer established by comparison with an absolute scale of good and evil; utility alone validates them. Since the appearance of respectability is desirable, Bourdon is indignant when Lefort, the architect, suggests he is not trustworthy. He accuses Lefort of libeling "the most respectable body of men" he knows and of "bringing under suspicion the Law itself." Bourdon's flexibility enables him to operate at both the level of reality and the level of appearance.

Teissier needs to operate only at the level of reality. His wealth and position are secure enough to make respectability irrelevant. He does not see his parents anymore because they ask for money. "They are starving," he admits. When he sees Marie, he is attracted to her. He first wants to keep her as his mistress, and, when she refuses those terms, he offers her marriage. Marriage is the price she sets, and he is willing to pay it. People are justified by their usefulness in the same manner as codes and standards.

Since the Vigneron family is no longer useful to Marie, Teissier cannot understand why she is not willing to let her "family stay in the ditch and go out and do something" for her own account. Her refusal to be his mistress to escape poverty is motivated by her family loyalty, not by an absolute moral standard. Family loyalty is a human virtue, normally to be commended. However, in the perverted society of *The Vultures*, it is the instrument which brings Marie to sell herself. The standards she uses in judging her action are those accepted by society. She considers only the result, not the act.

Marie and Teissier both recognize the nature of his proposal. He considers it a practical arrangement and seeks in her the same qualities Harpagon, in Molière's *The Miser*, wanted in a wife. The girl Harpagon considers, likes neither "a well served table . . . nor splendid clothes, nor rich jewels, nor sumptuous furniture." Teissier wants a woman with "simple taste . . . who will conduct herself decently in . . . [his] house, and who won't steal everything in sight." Marie accepts the proposal, knowing that it will be a "dishonest, self-seeking marriage," but in the world they both accept, such is the nature of marriage. This marriage, as Blanche's was to have been, will be economically motivated. The Vignerons' former position allowed them to hide the economic basis of Blanche's proposed marriage, but their

new condition prohibits a cloak of sentiment. Marie, knowing that Mrs. Vigneron and Judith might object, makes it clear that such a marriage is their only salvation, and she reminds them of their dependence upon a society of which they had once been a part and its relative standards and values. The Vigneron world, with its emphasis on reputation acquired by economic progress, in this respect, echoes the seventeenth-century world of the cynical wits. It is not difficult to envision Marie speaking to Judith and her mother in the words of Congreve's Mirabell: "Why do we daily commit disagreeable and dangerous actions? to save that idol, reputation." For all the difference in tone between the two plays, the world of *The Vultures* is still run by the rules of *The Way of the World*.

Becque's play employs such realistic techniques as realistic dialogue and settings. Its action is based upon a realistic concept, a slice-of-life, a series of accidents which affect the Vigneron family. However, Becque's approach is classical rather than realistic. He is not satisfied to represent life; he holds up vices for condemnation. But unlike his master, Molière, he offers no corrective. Molière's solution was temperance: learning is all right for women, in moderation; caring for one's health is all right, in moderation; frankness is all right, in moderation. Such a solution was possible for Molière because he lived in a stable, hierarchical society which recognized absolute moral values. Becque's society is flexible and dislocated; its code is utilitarian and relative. He does not reject the utilitarian code, but he dislikes it. His moralistic intent distinguishes him from the true realists.

His intent is to reveal a society composed entirely of "vultures." Some of the "vultures" are obvious, such as Bourdon and Teissier. Others, such as Marie, seem to become "vultures" in order to survive. When Teissier says to Marie, "Child, since your father died you've been surrounded by a lot of scoundrels," Marie seems to be victimized by the "vultures," while, in fact, she, by accepting Teissier's terms, has joined their ranks. In fact, Becque suggests that by being a part of this society she has always been a "vulture." The Vignerons owed their fortune to Teissier and his ruthless methods, as Vigneron acknowledges: "I reckon it's Teissier and his factory that have made me what I am." In a corrupt society, only those willing to accept the perverted standard and basis of that society can achieve success. In *The Vultures*, Becque reveals that what appeared in the beginning to be an ideal home, and later became a group of economic relationships, had actually never been anything but a group of economic relationships. In this exposition of society and manners, however,

Becque has created a comedy of manners based upon a realistic concept; he has not presented "life as it is," the goal of the realistic playwright, but life as the satirist sees "it ought not to be"—the goal of the classical comic dramatist.

CARL W. WOOTON

#### NOTE

At the annual spring meeting of the Midwest Modern Language Association to be held at the University of Nebraska in 1962, there will be a Conference in Modern Drama. Anyone interested in reading a paper (15–20 minutes) at this conference should send his manuscript to Walter J. Meserve, Associate Editor, *Modern Drama*, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas.

# THE STATURE OF ARTHUR SCHNITZLER

## 1

THE EVALUATION OF ARTHUR SCHNITZLER by literary historians represents a case in point for the necessity of re-examining his work from the focal summit of mid-century experiences and insights. Although the Austrian author died three decades ago and his literary stature was established as early as 1910, professors and critics have unceasingly passed judgments upon him that are as contradictory and prejudiced as they are inadequate and unsound. Once overrated and praised to the sky, he is hardly ever mentioned anymore, or, at best, is subjected to standard clichés which, however inappropriate, nobody seems to have reassessed during the last thirty years. To give only a few pertinent examples: Paul Fechter (in the 3rd volume of the famous Vogt-Koch, *History of German Literature*, 1938) states that "most of his works are today obsolete because his thin vitality was unable to endow his characters with blood: the only creatures with whom he finds some kind of relationship are women." Somebody should have enlightened Fechter that women comprise more than one-half of the world's population and that consequently, even if the critic were right, Schnitzler would not have done so badly; however, one must consider that Fechter had to refrain from any praise in 1938 for the simple reason that Schnitzler was a Jew. Nevertheless, even a recent scholar such as Elise Dosenheimer (*Das deutsche soziale Drama von Lessing bis Sternheim*, 1949) does not list Schnitzler's name in the index of her book although the leading dramatist of Vienna's pre-war society seems to deserve a more rightful place in her study than the Norwegian playwright Ibsen. Finally, benevolent critics of Schnitzler in this country, such as A. W. Porterfield (*Stories and Plays by Arthur Schnitzler* [New York, 1930]) are also guilty of utter misjudgment when they gloss over everything that seems risqué and puzzling in Schnitzler's writings and praise him instead for "paying a splendid tribute to the Austrian troops" in one of his least significant plays. In short: the time is ripe for a new and unbiased look at the Austrian's work from the viewpoint of historical pertinence and aesthetic quality.

Seldom has a writer linked himself so closely with one geographical background and spiritual locality as has Arthur Schnitzler. Born in Vienna in 1862, he lived in Vienna, loved in Vienna, practiced medi-

cine in Vienna, wrote in Vienna and, finally in 1931, died in Vienna. Son of a well-known Jewish throat specialist whose private practice included many of the leading theatrical and operatic stars of his time, young Schnitzler was soon drawn to the dual world of the stage and of medicine which was to become the center of his life-long interests and endeavors. After graduating from the University of Vienna in 1885, he served internships for several years and finally became attached to his father's clinic where he interested himself mainly in psychiatry and what is today known as parapsychology: hypnosis, neurasthenia, telepathy, the works of Lombroso, Krafft-Ebbing and the early Freud. Until 1894 he also acted as an editor of a medical journal and made surveys on clinical conditions in larger European cities such as Berlin and London. After the success of his play *Light-o'-Love* (*Liebelei*, 1895) he devoted himself primarily to writing although he never officially abandoned his medical practice. At first very active in literary feuds and movements at the turn of the century, Schnitzler became one of the leaders of the group called "Young Vienna" which stood in marked contrast to the radical Naturalism of Berlin. Together with Hermann Bahr and Hugo von Hofmannsthal he was a protagonist of Austrian Impressionism. Withdrawing more and more into seclusion, he lived a private life which was devoid of all publicity as well as of colorful events. As S. Liptzin reveals (*Arthur Schnitzler* [Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1932]), Schnitzler resented written references to his personal life and, when once asked for complete biographical data, submitted the following tight-lipped significant sentence: "I was born in 1862 and was a physician." According to his son Heinrich, a dramatics professor in California, there is much unpublished biographical material in his father's estate, but most of it will not be made available to the public for quite some time. Any appraisal of Schnitzler rests, therefore, solely on his literary stature.

Although the collected works of Arthur Schnitzler contain eleven stately volumes in the original German edition and the bulk of his production has been translated into the major languages of the world, the average modern American reader is likely to have—at best—a very incomplete and probably somewhat derogatory picture of the Austrian author. He might have come across an exorbitantly priced copy, labelled "obscene," of *Hands Around* (*Reigen*) in one of the second-hand bookshops of a major city, or he might remember that a French motion picture under the name *La Ronde*, based on the same work, was banned by the New York censors. A few ardent addicts to the off-Broadway theater could recently see a stage version of the play and selected scenes from *Anatol*. A film fan might perhaps remember an old German picture with Elizabeth Bergner in the lead, derived from

the daring novella *Fräulein Else*. Students of German in American colleges probably know one or two stories and one-act plays; and apprentices of the drama might occasionally come across Schnitzler's name in an outdated anthology of continental plays. The general reader knows nothing of him today although most public libraries still contain books by the Viennese writer. As for Germany and Austria, Schnitzler's works were, of course, unavailable during the Nazi regime, so that only the older generation has a few recollections left. The German theater has practically abandoned Schnitzler who was once primarily famous as a playwright, whereas his shorter narratives are currently being re-introduced to German and Austrian readers by his old publisher. While the author seemed likely to be remembered as one of the major European dramatists only a few decades ago, a fresh analysis of Schnitzler's contribution to literature is bound to change what now appear to be misconceptions and to reveal his true stature more objectively in the face of the aesthetic and psychological evidence accumulated since his death in 1931.

## 2

In order to grasp the essence of a writer's work, it is pointless to enumerate all his publications and to rehash the plots of his plays and stories. In the case of an author who admittedly has written a great amount of topical and outdated material and who, nevertheless, claims a lasting place in the annals of German and World literature, the pertinent task is obviously the selection of those works that are, for reasons to be shown, typical, significant, and, according to qualitative standards, outstanding among his general output. From the point of German literary history, Schnitzler's first book has remained his most important work. *Anatol* (1892) is a series of seven dramatic sketches, originally published under different titles in various magazines. In each of the short dialogues we find the charming, blasé, frivolous and at the same time melancholy, philandering amateur-poet Anatol in the center, aided by his skeptic, realistic, raisonneur-friend Max. In each of the little scenes a different woman appears, each one a variation of the "sweet girl" (*Süsses Mädel*) which has been associated with Vienna ever since and which Schnitzler has created again and again in many plays. Elegant escapism, nostalgia, resignation, slight neurosis, ever fleeting time, relativity of human feelings and experiences—these are the ingredients of Anatol's world. To enjoy the moment—the only reality one can be sure of—is Anatol's only philosophy, and life is an eternal hunting-ground for fresh and interesting experiences; consequently, even sickness is preferred to health because health is dull. "There is only one health, but there are many sick-

nesses," Anatol tells Max. Devoid of any dramatic structure or climax, the Anatol-scenes have, nevertheless, often been produced on the stage in Austria; and it is the elegance and sophistication of the dialogue as well as the over-all enchantment of the mood that make this, Schnitzler's first work, an important literary document. In its emphasis on illusion rather than reality, and its fixation on the moment in the flux of time, *Anatol* is the best example of Impressionism in the history of German literature.

After a few rather pale attempts at the stage with topical plays (about duelling, about "fallen" girls, about society's attitude to illegitimate offspring), Schnitzler scored a great popular success with *Light-o'-Love* which he never surpassed with any other dramatic work. Lieutenant Fritz Lobheimer who carries on a flirtation with Christine is challenged to a duel by the husband of a society woman with whom he has previously had an affair. Sensing his pending doom, Fritz realizes that, for the first time, he would have been capable of real love in the arms of Christine; but society compels him to answer "the call of honor" and to let himself be shot for a woman who means nothing to him anymore. Christine, unaware of the situation, learns of Fritz's death after he has already been buried. Believing that what had been the first and only love of her life had only meant a passing flirtation to him, she commits suicide. The plot of this extremely touching drama is simple and developed with artistic economy; the characters including Christine's understanding widower father, her gay friend Mizi, and Fritz's loyal comrade Theodor, are well drawn; the bitter-sweet mood of love in the shadow of death places the play in the vicinity of genuine tragedy. Christine is the most touching "Süsses Mädel" that Schnitzler ever created.

+ *Anatol* and *Light-o'-Love* circumscribe the thematic range of most of Schnitzler's dramatic work. Love and flirtation, faithfulness and infidelity, upper-class man and lower-class woman, fleeting time and the finality of death, dreamy illusion and life's seeming reality—these are the conflicts and problems of the Austrian playwright's heroes and heroines, victims and bystanders. The impressionist's concentration on the moment as the only safe reality in the constant shift of appearances naturally led Schnitzler to the short form of drama, the one-act play, in which he brilliantly excelled. In the verse playlet *Paracelsus* (1897) a woman's faithfulness is tested under hypnosis. Cyprian who boasts about his wife Justina's love must learn that even after thirteen years of marriage she often longs for Paracelsus who once courted her. Anatol, faced with a similar situation in one of his amorous adventures, had wisely preferred the illusion of being loved to the risk of a negative answer. The less sophisticated and primitively bourgeois Cyprian be-

lieves that his wife's avoidance of forbidden paths is proof of her fidelity. Overwhelmed by the new hypnotic revelations, he wonders which is the real Justina: his seemingly faithful companion for thirteen years or the complicated woman into whose subconscious desires he had just been allowed to peek. Paracelsus' answer is the almost classic and often quoted formulation of the impressionistic artist's credo: "One person plays with wild soldier hordes; another, with superstitious fools; still another, with suns and stars. I play with human souls. Only he who looks for a meaning finds one. Dream life and wakeful life, truth and fiction flow into each other. Certainty is nowhere to be found. We know nothing of others, nothing of ourselves. We play always. He who realizes this is wise."

*The Green Cockatoo* (*Der Grüne Kakadu*, 1898), one of Schnitzler's most celebrated one-act plays, is but another variation of the entanglement of dream and life. On the eve of July 14, 1789, a group of French aristocrats are whiling away the time in a Paris café. The famous actor Henri entertains the customers with a brilliant performance of jealousy by announcing that he has just killed a nobleman who had stolen his bride. Sensing from the reaction of the spectators that the jest was actually true, he puts on a "real performance" when the duke later enters, and kills him. The mob of patriots returning from storming the Bastille hails Henri as a champion of the people while the aristocratic spectators are suddenly faced with real, and not imaginary, danger. What gives genuine substance to the little play, is the wild and tumultuous atmosphere of the French Revolution which the author has re-created with a fine sense of historical feeling.

As a supreme example of Schnitzler's sophistication and wit, rare in German letters, the trifling but highly amusing *Literature* (1901) might be mentioned: Marguerite, engaged to Klemens, has written a novel into which she has incorporated the entire love correspondence of a previous affair. Klemens, somewhat embarrassed, tries to prevent publication by having all copies bought up and destroyed. Then Gilbert enters and presents Marguerite with a copy of his latest novel in which, likewise, their former correspondence is to be found word for word. When Klemens returns, Marguerite snatches the only surviving copy of her novel from his hands and hurls it into the fireplace. Her fiancé is overwhelmed by this "sacrifice" while Gilbert departs, distressed that he did not think of the same domestic scene as an ending for his own novel. In a similar sardonic and frivolous mood is the notorious collection of ten dialogues about sex, written in 1896 but not published until 1903 under the title *Hands Around*. With great delicacy and yet with amazing frankness Schnitzler exposes here the emptiness of the sex act if devoid of spiritual participation. In the

words of S. Liptzin (*Schnitzler*, p. 98): "With painful accuracy, he dissects what some people dare to call love but what to him is a ghastly desecration of this sacred term. . . . With astounding courage, he tears off the mask of hypocrisy that covers sexuality." Although it is unfair to Schnitzler's reputation as an important writer of the twentieth century that many people still know him only as the author of the presumably risqué *Hands Around*, there is nothing pornographic or immoral in these melancholy, sad, and often humorous conversations about the physical aspects of love. While the dialogues were even performed on German stages after 1920 (although the author did not consider that possibility in 1896), American courts, by once banning the film based on the play, have unfortunately given undue notoriety to a piece of literature which, however daring in theme, is executed throughout in excellent taste.

When Schnitzler dealt with topical problems in his plays, he was usually not too successful. He often piled one conflict on top of another, or even shifted his main interest suddenly in the middle of a drama to a new issue. The writing history of some of his major plays from first draft to last revised edition reveals this structural weakness very clearly, as a study of *The Call of Life* and *The Lonely Way* will show. There is also the conflict between Schnitzler the dramatist and Schnitzler the novelist which was often resolved at the expense of the latter, even in cases where narrative treatment would have been more appropriate. As to historical drama writing, *Young Medardus* (*Der Junge Medardus*, 1909) makes it clear that the author was too much a man of nervous temperament and super-sensitivity to forego his modern psychological approach while dealing with men and matters of the past. Medardus is a kind of Anatol who is simultaneously involved in a personal, passionate love-hate affair and in the political task of Napoleon's assassination, not to mention a number of sub-plots which make the swollen pageant-like undertaking rather confused and unsatisfying. Schnitzler was at his best when he remained within the range of his personal and professional experiences. By far his best topical play is, therefore, *Professor Bernhardi* (1912), which deals with people and issues he knew well: doctors, clinical atmosphere, a problem of medical ethics, and the issue of anti-Semitism. The first draft made in 1899 states the plot in one sentence (Liptzin, p. 177): "A physician expels a priest who wishes to administer the last sacrament to a dying person, because this dying person imagines himself healthy and does not suspect that he is at death's door." In the final version the patient has become a girl and the director of the clinic a Jew, surrounded by political cliques and intrigues. Thus, the issue has been sharpened and when Dr. Bernhardi is finally sentenced to

jail for "forcibly hindering a priest in the exercise of his sacred duty," it is quite clear that no scandal would ever have arisen had the physician in charge not been a Jew. Bernhardi, a man of science, refuses to be dragged into politics, however, and rejects all intercessions in his behalf. Finally vindicated, he returns to his practice. Of all of Schnitzler's mature full-length plays, *Professor Bernhardi* is by far his best work. The issues are sharply drawn, the plot logically developed, the characters superbly vivid. With the exception of one insignificant nurse part, there are no women in this drama, and no love conflict arises. Although written somewhat pro domo by an author who knew what it meant to be a Jew in the academic world of Imperial Austria, the anti-Semitic issue is never unduly stressed and only underlines the main problem of medical ethics. Although Schnitzler continued to produce dramas until the year of his death, he never equalled, in quality of plot development and individual characterization, his physician-drama of 1912.

Schnitzler's fiction comprises as many or more titles as his dramatic production, but its impact on the course of modern literature has been less notable. In some cases the lines can not be drawn sharply anyhow; are not the basically undramatic scenes of *Anatol* and *Hands Around* stories in dialogue form rather than plays? At any rate, for the purpose of this literary profile, the prose writer Schnitzler can be dealt with briefly. Between 1890 and 1910 it is mainly the short story which attracted him, while in later years he was more interested in the longer forms of the novella and novel. The reason for this is simple: one-act play and short story were the proper vehicles of expression for the leader of "Young Vienna," who, like his friend Hofmannsthal, clung to the moment as the only safe reality. An exception is *Sterben* (1892), which, however, might be more properly called a psychological study than a novella. A man, given one more year to live by his doctor, slowly adjusts himself to his fate and while he disintegrates, his bride, who was once ready to die with him, is gradually alienated and finally comes to hate and fear him. The piece is a superb clinical-psychological study, written at a time when the author was still close to the active practice of medicine. Most of the short stories are in the same sardonic, frivolous, flirtatious vein as are Schnitzler's short playlets. What makes them stand out among similar short fiction in German letters is un-Teutonic charm, gracefulness, and lucidity of style.

Of great importance for modern world literature is a satirical story, *Leutnant Gustl* (1900), which has often been dismissed as "just an amusing skit," although it represents an experiment in the modern stream-of-consciousness technique long before James Joyce. A young lieutenant, while leaving a concert hall, has a row with a baker who

insults his honor by calling him a "Dummer Junge" (stupid youth). Horrified at his failure to react properly, the lieutenant paces the streets of Vienna all through the night and finally decides that, as long as the chance of gossip and publicity exists, the code of honor of his caste requires his suicide. At early dawn he steps into a café for his last breakfast and learns, by chance, that the baker has died from a stroke during the night. Now he can go on living. (Again the significant moment: had he not stopped at the café he would have killed himself in vain.) The whole story is conceived from the lieutenant's point of view and is one gigantic "interior monologue," as some critics have called it. The author has recorded the complete chain of associations as they enter his hero's mind, with all the seemingly illogical jumps and shifts. Since Schnitzler handles the new technique with superb mastery, the whole background of a typically young, care-free, slightly foolish, and yet lovable officer of his time and class (Viennese society at the turn of the century) becomes transparent. As far as I can see, no similar attempt at this "interior monologue" has been made by any German writer until Arnold Döblin tried to introduce Joyce's technique in his *Berlin Alexanderplatz* three decades later. Schnitzler later repeated his tour-de-force in the well-known novella *Fräulein Else* (1926) with great popular success. A young girl subjects herself to agonizing humiliation in order to save her bankrupt father from prison. An old, rich roué has promised to extend the needed cash amount if Else will offer her unclothed body to his view for fifteen minutes. While fighting her indignation and shame, she prepares for the ordeal—but on her own terms: she confronts the man in a public hotel room filled with guests, drops the coat from her nude body, faints, and while everyone believes her to be suffering from an attack of hysteria she takes an overdose of sleeping pills and dies. The satirical and sardonic mood of *Leutnant Gustl* has become sad and tragic; the technique is the same "interior monologue," and the psychological skill of the author, particularly in the passages prior to the girl's death, is extraordinary.

*Fräulein Else* reveals one of Schnitzler's strongest assets as a writer: his unusual and penetrating understanding of the female psyche. His women are generally more interesting and more alive than his men. The titles of many of his better-known works of fiction symbolize the author's preoccupation with the problems and experiences of the female sex: *Bertha Garlan* (*Frau Bertha Garlan*, 1900); *The Strange Woman* (*Die Fremde*, 1903); *The Diary of Redegonda* (*Das Tagebuch Der Redegonda*, 1909); *Beatrice* (*Frau Beate Und Ihr Sohn*, 1913); *Die Frau Des Richters*, 1925; *Theresa* (*Therese*, 1928).

Just as Schnitzler succeeded in writing one successful topical play,

*Professor Bernhardi*, which turned out to become his best drama, so he reached his peak as a novelist with *The Road to the Open* (*Der Weg Ins Freie*, 1908), his longest and most autobiographical work. Baron Fritz von Wergenthin, a twenty-seven-year old composer, makes the acquaintance of Anna Rosner, who wants to be an opera singer, but has to content herself with giving music lessons since her voice is not strong enough. Although Georg loves Anna, he cannot envision the rigidity of bourgeois matrimony for his carefree nature. After she has given birth to a stillborn child, he drifts away from her. Without remorse he accepts the interpretation of his friend Heinrich Bermann: "Anna was perhaps fashioned to be your beloved, but not your wife." What makes the novel mainly interesting is the broad tapestry of Viennese pre-war society against which the thin plot is developed: men and women of the lower aristocracy and the upper middle class with a large sprinkling of Jews, social life in the salons and café-houses, and the issues of Austrian politics, anti-Semitism, the Zionist movement (Schnitzler knew Herzl well), Chauvinism, tolerance, and art in its broad bearing on social culture. Schnitzler felt himself to be an Austrian writer within the broader stream of German civilization, and he presented his different Jewish types with great objectivity and often with a somewhat ironic condescension. In view of what was to happen in Austria three decades later, his novel is an important document of courage, insight, and artistic objectivity. Brilliantly written, it will hold the interest of a contemporary reader although the less gentle world of the fifties has unduly paled its enchanting atmosphere.

## 3

If a German scholar were to compile a list of the most important German authors of the twentieth century, it is likely that he would omit Schnitzler. There are, however, compelling reasons for including him among the great authors of our time, which are, admittedly, less conspicuous to eyes that were systematically prejudiced and misdirected toward patriotic provincialism and the so-called literature of blood and soil. The author has also suffered from a relative absence of aesthetic and stylistic considerations in German academic studies, which often leads critics to confuse seemingly lofty aims with actual accomplishments. The meagerness of good German comedies, for instance, might be attributable to a critical attitude that has always favored the solemn practitioner of second-rate tragedy over the accomplished craftsman of what is only "light." And the fact that Schnitzler was never solemn but always light, even in the lofty treatment of serious problems, has removed him from the heavy-weight class of champions in the judgment of many German academic critics.

It is for this reason that the Austrian's true stature will emerge more fully when viewed in the light of contemporary world literature.

However, even within the confinement of literary struggles in the German-writing world, Schnitzler's position is a major one. Insofar as one can speak of literary Impressionism—and there is some doubt as to the validity of the term—Schnitzler's *oeuvre* is the clearest manifestation of that movement which had its place between the socially conscious Naturalism of Gerhart Hauptmann and the socially oblivious Neo-romanticism of Hugo von Hofmannsthal at the turn of the century. In contrast to the latter he was no idealist, but neither did he share the former's massive materialism. Schnitzler was still a determinist, but he was not interested in external social issues. He represented the last refinement of Naturalism that might be termed literary Impressionism. His concern was psychological. He also wanted reform, but reform of the soul. He did not believe in general cures and recipes for everybody, but in individual remedy, based on both the psychic make-up of the hero and the respective situation he finds himself in. Therefore, Schnitzler withdrew into the only remaining reality of the moment. Just as a certain color may appear different under changing conditions of light and shadow, a seeming crime might be a good deed if only certain prejudices and misconceptions were removed. Interested only in the inner veracity of human beings, Schnitzler exposed social taboos such as duels and misalliances, and stepped on the sore toes of sex prejudice and racial superstition. Like Anatol who was afraid to penetrate the thin layer of appearances, the young Schnitzler contented himself with the seeming security of illusion. He was the foremost artist of the German language to give articulation to the Impressionistic leanings of that group which called itself "Young Vienna" and dominated Austrian letters until World War I.

Just as the new, energetic, growing, and active capital of Bismarck's new Reich, Berlin, became the logical center of the strong and hard-hitting Naturalistic Movement, so the old, cosmopolitan, show-loving and art-laden metropolis of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy lent itself as proper backdrop to the café-house litterateurs of the Impressionistic Movement. And no writer has expressed more fully and more convincingly that aspect of Vienna than Schnitzler has done. His "sweet girl" has become the epithet for Austrian charm; and the gay—yet sad, the frivolous—yet melancholy, the "gemütliche" and yet malicious world of his characters reflects the atmosphere of Imperial Viennese society most truthfully. Just as Sinclair Lewis remains an important social critic of a certain phase of American society—irrespective of literary merits—just as Heinrich Mann's satire of Imperial German Babbitism must be called a painful but accurate diagnosis

of the era of William the Second, so Schnitzler has attained the position of Vienna's foremost literary painter. Vienna is in his blood and the image of it in his characters—even if they temporarily leave the city as they sometimes do (*Therese*). Vienna is not only the landscape of Schnitzler's soul but also the "soil" of all his roots. German critics, true to the romantic Nazi-notion of "blood and soil" usually decry an author who is at home in the big city. He is just an "asphalt-litterateur" whom they graciously absolve from having any roots at all. They overlook the undeniable fact that the culture of the twentieth century is urban and that the city can be as intensely "home" and "root" to an artist as the remote hamlet in an isolated valley. While German professors busied themselves with praising rural nonentities like Griese, Waggerl, Blunck, the outside world discovered the significance of Franz Kafka's urban nightmares for our time. It must be stated, therefore, that Schnitzler as the poet of Vienna is not only to be viewed as the most charming portraitist of that city in German literature, but must be considered one of the first great urban writers from the focal point of comparative literature and sociology.

Some of Schnitzler's most engaging qualities might possibly be traced to his city background: his wit, sophistication, elegance of style, and artistic taste. He is one of the very few German authors who can make the *grosse Welt* believable. Whereas Wedekind often sounds like little Joe imagines personages in high society to converse, Schnitzler's dukes, barons, countesses, ambassadors, undersecretaries and so on speak a sophisticated and witty idiom which seems utterly believable. Since their author moved naturally in the circles of Viennese society, his characters are as real as Griese's retarded peasants. An infinitely painstaking craftsman, Schnitzler worked exceedingly hard at the final formulation of what he wished to say, as numerous drafts and revisions of his manuscripts reveal. What looks like charming ease on the printed page is often the result of exasperating patience. His is a style of utmost lucidity, free of pompousness or sentimentality; his short stories call Somerset Maugham to mind. As Thomas Mann once remarked, Schnitzler's superb taste has prevented him from making a single mistake. Considering the delicate and daring nature of many of his themes, his sure artistic tact seems astonishing. He knew what to say, how much to say, and where to stop. His graceful, simple style ranks with the best masters of German prose.

What assures Schnitzler his place in the world literature of the current century is precisely that preoccupation with sex and depth-psychology which formerly shocked his critics. He was aware of the erratic nature of human behavior and saw the human soul as a "vast domain" (as he called it in one of his less successful dramas), at a time which

still believed in the conventional psychology of the unified personality. He realized the importance of the dream as the gate to the subconscious. With the equipment of the psychiatrist, he expressed through the medium of literature what Freud arrived at through scientific research. The extent of Schnitzler's familiarity with Freud's theories is not known yet, although a letter by Freud exists in which he commends the author for having independently discovered the same truths. Whatever light may be shed on this question by the publication of Schnitzler's diaries in the future, the fact remains that he was one of the first authors to probe into the hitherto hidden motivations of his characters. His concentration on sex, which was often misunderstood as a sign of frivolity by naïve critics, is only the proof of his affinity to Freudian psychoanalysis. While many of Schnitzler's plays are obsolete and beyond rescue because of issues dead today (duelling, illegitimate children, women's rights in marriage), his narrative work—or at least a great deal of it—must be considered part of living world literature, since it is still meaningful and modern in every aspect. Since Joyce's lonely attempts at isolating the particles of the human soul in the muddy stream of the subconscious seem to lead to the obliteration of literature, a study of Schnitzler's more moderate "interior monologue" may show a literary technique worth studying and developing. It could be that in this respect, too, he knew how far the artist should go.

CLAUDE HILL

# RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND PROBLEMS IN THE STUDY OF GERMAN EXPRESSIONIST DRAMA

THOSE WHO ARE NOW ENGAGED in the study of German Expressionist drama are very fortunate. They possess an excellent guide to both the primary sources and the critical writing in their field, Claude Hill and Ralph Ley's *The Drama of German Expressionism: A German-English Bibliography* (University of North Carolina Press, 1960). It is difficult to overestimate the practical value of this bibliography. It lists all the plays written by sixteen major Expressionists and all the books, articles, dissertations, and reviews in both German and English that bear in any way on the Expressionist drama. The bibliography includes general investigations of modern literature as well as works devoted to literary Expressionism as such and monographs on individual Expressionist playwrights. The Hill-Ley bibliography is especially helpful to the student of comparative literature since it lists all English translations of German Expressionist drama with publication data. The student is furnished with a time- and energy-saving device of great importance since he can now find at one glance what Expressionist plays were published in English at any given time.

The only drawback of this bibliography is an inevitable one. It had to be completed at one point in time. The authors chose the year 1957 as their terminal year. Yet the current renascence of interest in literary Expressionism had only begun then and has come into full swing since 1957. Naturally Hill and Ley's guide omits recent developments. Any researcher in the field will have to remember that 1957 was not the last year of scholarship and criticism in this area. Interest in Expressionism has steadily increased since 1957 and will probably gain even greater momentum in the next few years. It is to be hoped that Professors Hill and Ley will be able to add a supplement to their bibliography in 1962 or 1963.

Professor Richard Brinkmann's summary of latest scholarship on Expressionism appeared in the *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* of July, 1960, entitled "Neue Literatur zum Expressionismus." Brinkmann's report covers the territory left uncovered by the Hill-Ley bibliography. It offers the ad-

ditional advantage of summaries of content and critical evaluations of the scholarly contributions which appeared between 1958 and the early part of 1960. Brinkmann's earlier report (1959) in the same journal called "Probleme des Expressionismus" covers most of the scholarly and critical work still included in the Hill-Ley bibliography, but in the extremely helpful form of summaries of contents plus critical evaluation.

The two journals *Modern Drama* and *The Tulane Drama Review* offer splendid opportunities for the English-speaking person interested in the Expressionist drama. *The Tulane Drama Review* especially brings through translations of whole plays or individual scenes long-forgotten authors like Sternheim, Kaiser, Toller to a new generation of readers who can be expected to accept the Expressionists with greater interest and sympathy than the preceding generation could afford.

The current renascence of interest in the Expressionist drama is of course intimately linked to Professor Eric Bentley's attempt to bring the dramatic literature of the world to the English-speaking public through easily available translations. His own translations and those inspired by him are beginning to offer the American audience the first possible contact with German Expressionist drama in over thirty years. Anchor Books is now preparing the most ambitious venture in this direction—a paperback anthology of complete plays and individual scenes by Sternheim, Kaiser, Bronnen, Toller, Hasenclever, Sorge, Barlach, Lauckner, Kornfeld, and Goll in English translations.

Until recently it was, and in many cases it still is, a vexing problem to get hold of Expressionist plays in the original German. The small editions in which many Expressionist plays were published originally and Hitler's subsequent ruthless persecution and destruction of things Expressionist created a scarcity of copies. A few of the famous plays such as Sorge's *Der Bettler*, Kaiser's *Bürger von Calais*, and Toller's *Hinkemann* were reissued after the war in cheap editions but most Expressionist plays have remained unavailable outside of a few public and university libraries and private collections. This scarcity of available copies has put great obstacles in the path of the teacher of Expressionist drama and still tends to make Expressionism a legend rather than a concrete experience for many interested students. The problem is beginning to be solved in two ways: first by the publication of anthologies of Expressionist plays, and secondly by the publication of the collected works of major Expressionists. Karl Otten's one-volume, 1000-page anthology of extracts, scenes and acts of Expressionist plays *Schrei und Bekenntnis (Scream and Confession)* (Luchterhand Verlag, 1959) offers a partial solution only. It contains snippets

from many Expressionist dramas not only of the major figures, but of obscure dramatists and of authors like Kafka and Musil famous in other fields, but the absence of a significant number of complete plays vitiates the utility of Otten's anthology. S. Fischer has published Franz Werfel's dramas, edited by Professor Klarmann. The work of Iwan Goll, including his dramas which form an interesting link between Expressionism and Surrealism, was published by his widow Claire Goll (Luchterhand Verlag, 1960).

Mr. H. F. Garten's *Modern German Drama* (Oxford and Essential Books, 1959) offers the English-speaking reader the opportunity to become familiar with the plots of most German Expressionist plays and the dates and biographies of their authors. It is a very good book for a beginning acquaintance with the subject. It can help to introduce teachers and students of the drama as well as little-theater groups in search of interesting plays to the repertory of Expressionism. It is, however, insufficient for anyone who desires to deepen his acquaintance with the drama of Expressionism.

A historical-critical study of the whole movement of Expressionism is now available in English—Walter H. Sokel's *The Writer in Extremis: Expressionism in Twentieth-Century German Literature* (Stanford University Press, 1959). In this book I made the attempt to define Expressionism not as an isolated phenomenon but as related to similar movements and tendencies in other literatures, especially Surrealism, as well as to German literature and civilization as a whole. I also attempted to present Expressionism not as a unified concept or doctrine, which it never was, but as a common label for heterogeneous and sometimes mutually contradictory tendencies.

Scholarly and critical monographs on individual Expressionists continue to be published in Germany. Recently the third book on Georg Kaiser since World War II appeared—Wolfgang Paulsen's *Georg Kaiser: Die Perspektiven seines Werkes* (Tübingen, 1960). (An older book on Kaiser, Mr. Kenworthy's, is available in English.)

Professor Paulsen's book raises the problem which I see as the major opportunity and direction for future work on Expressionism. What is Expressionism? Paulsen's study of Kaiser forcefully reminds us of the necessity of finding a meaningful and applicable definition of the term Expressionism, or Expressionist drama, a definition which does not have to be, and in all likelihood will not be, a simple one. Mr. Paulsen in his interesting and provocative book claims that the most significant work of Georg Kaiser was not Expressionist at all. Other critics have claimed similar exemptions for their special authors. Sternheim, Werfel, Toller, Goll, Barlach—practically all the major Express-

sionists have been "rescued" from Expressionism. It seems at times that the term Expressionism is felt to be an insult or at any rate some kind of degradation which only applies to the other fellow's fellow and never to your own. Obviously if Georg Kaiser, who more than any other dramatist made German Expressionism famous, is not to be considered a "real Expressionist" the term becomes meaningless.

This semantic confusion shows how badly we are in need of a definition of Expressionism in the drama which will enable us to know what we are talking about. But how can we arrive at such a definition? I suggest that categories be set up and applied to the dramas usually considered "Expressionist." These categories should be defined in terms of questions, such as, for example: Can we or can we not speak of a plot in the dramas considered? If there is a plot, what determines it? What makes the persons appearing in these dramas tick? Are they motivated? If so, what motivates them? What is the relationship between their motivations, if any, and the results of their actions? To what extent is the plot determined by the characters and to what extent is it undetermined by them? In what manner do the characters shape the plot, if they shape it at all? Through actions or through words or through both? What is the dialogue like? Is it genuine communication or is it alternating monologues or is it rhetoric—an instrument of persuasion? And if the latter, who persuades whom? Do the characters persuade each other or do they seek to persuade the audience? How essential is theatricalism to the plays and what does it consist in? Such categories and others like them, couched in terms of questions, could serve as a basis from which the analysis and comparison of the so-called "Expressionist" playwrights could proceed.

Such a study or series of studies would serve a number of purposes. 1. It would force us to stop seeing Expressionism as a nebulous yet monstrous monolithic entity from which concrete works and authors are excluded as somehow too good or too sensible or too poetic or too rational or too irrational or whatever to be "really and truly" Expressionist. 2. It would preserve us from the opposite extreme—nominalism, the denial of the existence of Expressionism as a historical reality. 3. It would give us a clear view of the several dominant and discordant formal and thematic tendencies which together form whatever it is we call Expressionism. Probably we shall arrive at at least two basic types of Expressionist drama with little in common between them: one related to Shaw, Pirandello, Brecht, the other to Strindberg and the miracle and mystery plays. 4. It would begin to place Expressionist drama within world drama in three main directions: the past, the

present, and the future. It would investigate the links between Expressionism and older forms of drama; it would define Expressionism in its relationship to French Surrealism and the American Expressionist drama of O'Neill, Elmer Rice, and others; and finally it would clarify the significance of Expressionism for the theater of the absurd of our own day.

WALTER H. SOKEL

# A SCENE FROM AN UNPUBLISHED VERSION OF FRANK WEDEKIND'S *LULU-TRAGEDY*

INTRODUCTION BY KADIDJA WEDEKIND-BIEL

THE STORY OF LULU as known from Frank Wedekind's two plays *Earth-Spirit* and *The Box of Pandora* was originally written as one play in five acts, beginning with the scene in the painter's studio where Lulu's picture is painted, and ending in a London garret where she is murdered by Jack the Ripper.

In the later versions—the ones which were published—the author made changes which are mainly a sort of heartbreaking and desperate compromise with the moral and theatrical standard of his time. Wedekind was not the man to whom making a compromise would come easily. Consequently, by this unfortunate procedure the meaning of the original creative idea was well-nigh obliterated.

Since after the completion of the original version, several scenes, particularly in the last act, were objected to as unproduceable, the author decided to take the play apart. He took the first three acts, and he wrote a new act to precede the one which now is the last act of *Earth-Spirit*. To this play in four acts he wrote a prologue. The title "Earth-Spirit" is taken from the Greek *Gaea*, another name of Pandora.

To the last two acts of the original version, which were now left over so to speak, Wedekind wrote a new first act, mainly in order to inform the audience of what has happened in *Earth-Spirit*. Now he had a play in three acts, and to this, too, he wrote a prologue which has in fact nothing at all to do with the plot but which is a dramatization of the author's difficulties with the offices of censorship. To this play he gave the title *The Box of Pandora*.

In the original version Lulu is not the "femme fatale" she is in *Earth-Spirit*. Wedekind had by then made the acquaintance of August Strindberg, and it seems that Strindberg's view of the female sex influenced Wedekind when he subtly but considerably changed the character of Lulu. Perhaps it is even more important that Wedekind had also met Strindberg's second wife, soon to be divorced, with whom during the following years he formed a relationship which was not a happy one for either of them.

In the original version Lulu is a personification of the material prin-

ciple. She is Pandora, who was created by the gods to present man with that fatal gift for an illusion of happiness which invariably turns into the realities of destruction. The fact that every man calls Lulu by a different name is significant, for everyone sees something different in her, and yet to all of them she is the same. Like a mirror, she reflects the strongest desire and the deepest fear of everyone of them.

Although the play carries an ethical, even a religious message, much of it is written in a light and playful vein, with the banter, the gaiety, the Parisian *frou-frou* of the late nineteenth century, the days of young Toulouse-Lautrec and old Renoir, of tragic and captivating personalities like Oscar Wilde, King Ludwig of Bavaria and Friedrich Nietzsche, the days, too, of Bertie, Prince of Wales, pushing sixty and paying undaunted homage to French *diseuses*, the days of August Strindberg, already famous, and of a struggling young dramatist by the name of Frank Wedekind.

The following scene is taken from the first act of this hitherto unpublished version. It takes place in a painter's studio. Eighteen-year-old Lulu, dressed as a pierrot, is posing on a rostrum. Black, a young painter, is busily working away at his easel, completing Lulu's picture. He is ill at ease as his work, as well as his model, is being watched and commented upon by the two men-about-town, Goll and Schön. Goll, Lulu's husband and old enough to be her grandfather, is a charmingly ugly old buck with a tremendous appetite for life, a medical man by profession and an enthusiastic ballet fan. Schön, owner and publisher of several newspapers, is a man of consequence and of superior intelligence. His son, Alva, the second generation, is in his early twenties, high-spirited and talented, but somewhat lacking in stamina. In this scene, however, he is on top of the world, as any young author would be whose first dramatic work is just about to be produced.

A screen is set up in front of the entrance-door. There was a knock, and Black has gone to answer it.

ALVA (*still behind the screen*): Is a friend of the muses allowed to enter?

LULU: Why, it's Mr. Alva!

SCHÖN: My son.

GOLL: Come right in, young man, don't be bashful!

ALVA (*coming in*): How are you, Herr Professor. (*he shakes hands with Goll, then turns and sees Lulu*) Well! Do I see right?! I only wish I could engage you as my leading lady!

LULU: Do you think I'd have talent?

SCHÖN (*to Alva*): What brings you here?

GOLL: I suppose you're having somebody's picture painted here secretly, too?

ALVA (*to Schön*): I've come to take you to the dress-rehearsal.

SCHÖN: Today already?

GOLL (*to Alva*): Is it a rehearsal with all the costumes?

ALVA: Yes, naturally. I have to be backstage in twenty minutes. (*with a look at Lulu*) Unfortunately.

LULU: Sunday is to be First Night, isn't it?

GOLL (*to Lulu*): Is it? How do you know?

LULU: You read it to me from the newspaper.

GOLL (*to Alva*): What is your play called again?

ALVA: Zarathustra.

GOLL: I thought he was in the madhouse — ?

ALVA: You mean Nietzsche, Herr Professor.

GOLL: You're right. I keep confusing the two.

ALVA: I get my ideas from his books to be sure.

SCHÖN: It was rather a daring venture to use them for a ballet.

GOLL (*with kindled enthusiasm*): There's dancing in your play?

ALVA: A dramatic ballet. After all, Herr Professor, Nietzsche is the greatest genius of dancing who ever lived!

GOLL (*very much at sea*): Then this must be a different one.

SCHÖN: No, no, indeed, he's the same.

GOLL: But I thought he was a philosopher?

ALVA: I put his philosophy on the feet of our prima ballerina!

GOLL (*with a nod*): It's the footwork and the legs by which you can tell a playwright.

ALVA: You'll see a lot of legs in my play!

LULU: Will you reserve a box for us on Sunday, Mr. Alva?

ALVA: How could you doubt it, Madam?!

SCHÖN (*looks at his watch and rises*): Incidentally, there isn't much time to lose.

ALVA: Why don't you come with us, Herr Professor?

GOLL: No, that's impossible.

ALVA: When the curtain goes up you'll see a clearing in the woods, and the little girls . . .

GOLL: Good Lord, keep away from me with the little girls!

ALVA: You'll see Zarathustra with his disciples, the wise men, the tightrope-walker, the last man, the first judge, the crooked officials—and finally, the birth of the superman!—Why don't you come?

GOLL: I can't.

ALVA: La Corticelli dances the superman with such grace — ?

GOLL: There was always something superhuman about her.

SCHÖN: While her mother was still alive, she danced with her legs —

ALVA: Then, when she was on her own, she put her mind to her dancing —

GOLL: And now she is putting her heart into it!

ALVA: So if you want to see her — ?

GOLL: Impossible. By the time I'm back this hell of a Breughel will have ruined the whole picture. What if he paints her a potato for a nose?

ALVA: Oh, that wouldn't be such a tragedy. He'd just have to paint over it. Come with us, Herr Professor! You'll see the goblins, the daughters of the desert . . .

GOLL: I'd be mainly interested in the superman.

ALVA: Afterwards we all are going to Peter's. There you can express your admiration in person.

GOLL: Will she come to Peter's, too? La Corticelli?

ALVA: Of course, we all meet there. They'll scold us if we don't bring you.

GOLL: Damn this painting nonsense!

SCHÖN (*to Goll*): By the way, I think your apprehensions are unfounded.

GOLL: If one doesn't explain every stroke of the brush to this Leonardo —

ALVA: The wise men are getting impatient! The daughters of the desert are quivering in their tights!

GOLL (*almost threateningly to Lulu and Black*): I'll be back in ten minutes.

ALVA (*taking his leave*): Alas, duty calls me, Madam —

GOLL (*behind Black, comparing the picture with Lulu*): There has to be more modeling here. The hair is bad. You don't concentrate enough.

ALVA (*laughing*): Oh come, Herr Professor!

GOLL: Well, I'll just hop it. I don't think I'll go along to Peter's though.

SCHÖN (*following Goll and Alva*): We can take my carriage. It's below.

(*They all go, but Alva looks out once more from behind the screen.*)

ALVA (*to Lulu*): Now don't move! Keep your pretty pose!<sup>1</sup>

1. Copyright 1961, Kadidja Wedekind-Biel.

## BOOK REVIEWS

**GUSTAV ADOLF**, by August Strindberg, translation and Introduction by Walter Johnson, Seattle, University of Washington Press, New York, The American-Scandinavian Foundation, 1957, pp. xi + 233. Price \$4.00.

American writers on the drama defer to Strindberg, but, generally speaking, they are familiar with only a few of the Swedish master's many works. More than a chance assortment of novels and plays is however needed in order to judge the achievement of a pivotal figure in the history of both Swedish literature and Western drama. The English-speaking world, notoriously lax in producing translations of important foreign writers who are not best-sellers, should therefore be humbly grateful to Walter Johnson for another translation of a late historical work by August Strindberg.

The gratitude we feel in possessing a new translation need nevertheless not affect our judgment of *Gustav Adolf* as a play. *Gustav Adolf* is Strindberg, but it is scarcely "modern drama." It is important for the understanding of the later Strindberg, but it cannot be called a drama for today's stage. In his lengthy introduction, Professor Johnson makes it clear that we are dealing with a *Buch-drama*. He valiantly tries to rescue the work for the theater by suggesting that it should be subjected to much judicious cutting; but the argument is not convincing. The drama embodies too much history and too many ideas ever to have the appeal of *The Father* or *A Dream Play* in England or America. In order to appreciate the drama, the reader should familiarize himself with its historical background—which Professor Johnson's introduction provides—but even then not all the allusions will be comprehended. What, if any, connotation does a remark like "it will be a mid-summer fire to direct the Swedes!" (p. 73) or the stage direction, "with a West Gothic accent" (p. 142), have for the reader in Kalamazoo?

Professor Johnson also proposes that the drama could be filmed. The spectacular nature of the piece and its many historical scenes would lend themselves better to the cinema than to the stage, but a faithful translation cannot provide a satisfactory script for the screen. While the translator implies that the dialogue is naturalistic, much of it certainly is not, and the Swedish lines do not seem any more like everyday speech when turned into English. Consider two random examples of dialogue which may be adjudged typical of the entire play. What sergeant, even a one-time university student, would say:

Is there such a terrible hurry about your abracadabra? Give the boys vacation from school today and let them throw stones down at the sea-shore. But, if they yell, you'll have to twist their necks; it's to be quiet, for the generals are coming here to sleep (p. 79).

Or can we believe that the miller, a simple man, would muse:

The starlings have never come; there are no rooks or wild doves on the unsown field, which only bears thistles and thorns; no pike leaps among the reeds, no perch in the stony shallows; the fish in the river and the brook have wandered out to sea, frightened by gunshot and the thunder of cannons (p. 67).

The dialogue is sometimes tiresome. Banér fills a whole page (p. 162) with historical exposition, beginning

However, the elector of Saxony was called a traitor then, but he wasn't one, for with his help the French had shot a wedge between Spanish Flanders and the Hapsburg crownlands, and the Spanish Satan, who after the conquest of America . . . [etc.]

The genealogies the King expounds on pp. 196-7 have a function, but are quite lost, at least on the foreign reader, not to mention a possible theater-goer.

In short, *Gustav Adolf* is Strindberg's attempt to portray Sweden's national hero and the Thirty Years' War on a single canvas. It can be read as if it were an historical novel, for Strindberg does succeed in making Gustav Adolf seem a real person and he does call up the disasters of the most destructive of European wars.

The accuracy of the translation can be questioned very few places. The translator hews close to the original, but occasional slang terms used in an effort to reproduce colloquial speech seem discordant: "big shots" for *storgubbar* and *pamperna*, "kids" for *grabber*, "those birds" for *gökarne*, and "shut up" for *tig*. A few infelicitous phrases fail to convey Strindberg's meaning: "twist their necks" (*supra*), "in the nick of time" (for "in a lucky hour" p. 170), "I already have" (for "I have with all my heart" p. 198), "live well" (for "farewell" p. 213), the ambiguous "minister" (for "clergyman" or "priest" p. 85).

Three phrases should have been included: "for 12 years" in the first speech of the miller's wife, "like John Banér" at the conclusion of Sparre's remarks on p. 209, and the stage direction "a strong light is thrown on the face of the king" at the very end of the play. In a note Professor Johnson defends the first omission by assuming that Strindberg failed to co-ordinate the temporal references in the play—less than a page apart in the text. Does not the miller's wife's complaint, "we have sinned," suggest how she could have grown children by the husband to whom she has been married "for 12 years"?

P. M. MITCHELL  
University of Illinois

**THE SAGA OF THE FOLKUNGS. ENGELBREKT**, by August Strindberg, translated by Walter Johnson, Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1959, 204 pp. Price \$4

The immensity of Strindberg's share in the dramatic portrayal of human character has dawned slowly upon the theater-goers of a distracted world. His alleged pessimism, hysteria, and hate have disconcerted entire audiences, and college students who absorb Ibsen with equanimity respond to the great Swede with puzzlement or horror. To the best of them, none the less, his vast energies are a revelation indeed. But not until very recent years has Strindberg been particularly known among the Angles and the Saxons as a writer of *historical* dramas. Owing to the Herculean labors of Professor Walter Johnson, an entire new dimension in Swedish drama is now available to our theaters, for with the present volume he has completed the translation and publication, with literary introductions and historical notes, of a round dozen of Strindberg's plays based on Swedish history. The great of England have an ancestral attraction for us, and the speeches set down for them by the Bard of Avon are in themselves priceless portions in our collective inheritance. If it must be quite otherwise with the translated products of a land whose history concerns most Americans not at all, just what interest does the "new" Strindberg hold for us?

Strindberg's formula is not pessimism *per se*, nor horror, nor hatred of women, however brilliantly the playwright's transitory prejudices and fleeting hostilities are captured intact for the purposes of drama. Uncanny penetration of the psychic realities that underlie external conduct, an almost unerring sense of

dramatic structure, brilliant individuation of character even among the minor rôles in a sizable cast—these are his strong points. Add to this a directness of language—found as well in Strindberg the novelist—which affords a real challenge to any translator owing to the speed and at times almost intolerable immediacy of the Swede's linguistic image and situation. English usage is perhaps more veiled and given to indirection. At all events, an adequately translated Strindberg is swiftly paced.

The two dramas noticed here are not on a par, for although the tragedy of Sweden's 15th century Tell, the national hero Engelbrekt, was one of Strindberg's favorite works, it lacks the subtlety and interest of his handling of King Magnus Eriksson of Norway and Sweden (1316-74), the troubles of whose reign are almost proverbial, and whom Strindberg makes to atone in his own person for the notorious crimes and passions of numerous generations of his own clan, the wily, gifted, and unscrupulous Folkungs. The age of the Folkungs was Sweden's equivalent to the War of the Roses. Professor Johnson has most admirably transmuted Strindberg's expressive, blunt Swedish into the complex materials of which English idiom is composed, and indicated corrections are very few. One such occurs at the top of p. 63, where ". . . If you dare" should read ". . . on whether you dare." On p. 64, the unsatisfactory phrase "you didn't get the ability" should read "the ability didn't go with it." On p. 65, in Ingeborg's last speech, an ambiguous colloquial pronoun has misled the translator: for "now he's moving" read "now it's moving." The curtain is meant. An excess of modesty has kept the translator from tackling Strindberg's occasional unpretentious verse, for which reason the "song of the smiths" is ineffective and well nigh pointless.

The translator's tidy historical comments omit one fact of note which, to be sure, would have bothered Strindberg little had he known of it, and that is that Magnus and his ancestors were not Folkungs at all! Swedish historians have recently disposed of the asserted relationship between Earl Folke and Magnus' ancestor, the regent Earl Birger. Playgoers will not care.

ERIK WAHLGREN  
University of California

A THEATER IN YOUR HEAD, by Kenneth Thorpe Rowe, Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1960, 438 pp. Price \$6.95.

*A Theater in Your Head* offers, according to its dust-jacket advertisement, "a complete dramaturgy for the reading of plays, from experiencing the play by visualization of production, through understanding by analysis, to the final pleasure of evaluation by principles of criticism." This is a reasonably accurate summary of the book's contents. The phrase, "a complete dramaturgy," is probably just a publisher's boast; but this book does indeed include a survey of theatrical arts and crafts; a lengthy consideration of dramatic structures, forms, and styles; and finally the complete text of a previously unpublished play, Theodore Ward's *Our Lan'*, which Professor Rowe analyzes exhaustively.

As a primer of dramaturgy, *A Theater in Your Head* will be used principally in college classrooms, where it may help somewhat to effect an armistice in the Lilliputian struggle between the forces of drama as "pure" theater and those of the drama as "pure" literature. To achieve such a reconciliation would require a fresh approach to the aesthetics of the form and a reappraisal of its historical and anthropological development—certainly no light undertaking. Professor Rowe's book does not go this far. Instead, in the portion of the book dealing with "experiencing the play by visualization," he offers an ample restatement of the old idea that dramatic art has theatrical production as its ultimate end and

that it is, therefore, important to know something about the theater in order to read plays intelligently. No drama critic would feel called upon to take up arms against this conclusion, but it may be only an innocuous half-truth—if not a "half-truism"; for it is extremely doubtful that a knowledge of stagecraft will help readers to better understand those plays which live principally as "literary" ideas cast in the dramatic form. The general reader will not find a knowledge of the complex techniques of staging very useful when a volume of Ibsen or Shaw is placed in his hands. While Professor Rowe's comments on theatrical production are in each instance clear and concise, their application seems occasionally forced.

Furthermore—as every reader who has seen his favorite plays produced must frequently realize—the value of visualizing a play in terms of its production is somewhat doubtful. Isn't one of the peculiar delights of play-reading to be found in freedom from the sort of limitations that performance necessitates? Doesn't Shakespeare transport his audiences beyond the circumference of the "wooden O" and urge their thoughts to deck his kings? Theatrical sorcery creates an illusion which is never made more beautiful or more stunning by a lengthy explanation of how the trick was carried off. Even though we may admire the resourcefulness of a production like the recent *Peter Pan*, the vision of Mary Martin being hauled off to Never-Never Land on a thin wire is no match for a child's image of a Peter who really flies.

In the second major portion of his book, Professor Rowe moves from "experiencing" to "understanding" the play. Here he attempts to do two things: to approach the play-form as a literary art-object and to classify and describe plays according to kind and style. The investigation of these complex subjects is admirably controlled and intelligently illustrated. Professor Rowe views the play-form as a dramatic question developed in three basic stages: the attack, the crisis, and the resolution. This terminology will do as well as most that beginning play-readers are asked arbitrarily to master, but the well-known danger of such a methodical approach is that the inexperienced reader may lose or distort the meaning of the play in too rigid an application of the method. The entire survey of theatrical styles, movements, and dramatic forms is concisely presented and should be useful to students and teachers. However, in dealing with modern tendencies, especially the various reactions to realism, Professor Rowe uses the conventional labels—expressionism, dadaism, theatricalism, etc.—which may be convenient but are not especially meaningful.

Finally, Professor Rowe gives a practical demonstration of his comprehensive method in an exhaustive analysis of Theodore Ward's Negro folk play, *Our Land*. His running commentary, printed along with the text of the play on facing pages, ranges from suggestions for staging and lighting to observations on characterization and Negro dialect. One can scarcely read a line of the play's dialogue without being dragged through a paragraph of "analysis." Analysis is one thing, clinical dissection another. Yet, if these voluminous notes were stimulating and provocative, one might enjoy them even as digressions; but many state what appears to be self-evident in the text itself, and some of the attempts to "visualize" the production actually blur Theodore Ward's spare, but effective, stage directions.

A *Theater in Your Head* contains some new and exciting material. There are, for example, excerpts from Elia Kazan's notes on directing *Death of a Salesman* and a portion of Sir John Gielgud's prompt-book for *The Lady's Not for Burning*. The book, as a whole, has much to say—and most of it sensible—about dramatic

structure and play production. If the reader is occasionally dissatisfied with a lack of depth in crucial areas, he has much to be thankful for in the book's comprehensive breadth.

EDWARD GROFF  
Pennsylvania State College

**THE FIRST FIVE LIVES OF ANNIE BESANT**, by Arthur H. Nethercot,  
Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1960, 395 pp. Price \$7.50.

Born in 1847, Mrs. Annie Besant (the name, she said, rhymes with *pleasant*) lived until 1933. In this volume Professor Nethercot of Northwestern recounts the first half of the remarkable life of this extraordinary woman. This first volume of a two volume biography ends in 1893 as Mrs. Besant left England for India to be the leader of the Theosophist movement, to be the friend of Gandhi, and to be, for a time, president of the Indian National Congress. Mr. Nethercot fully justifies the unusual title he gives this first volume, for Mrs. Besant did lead—consecutively, not simultaneously—five distinct and eventful lives.

In the first life the young Annie Wood, sheltered, scholarly, and charitable, was led by her interest in religion to marry a young Church of England clergyman. Like other romantic Victorian young ladies, she idealized the clergy. The marriage was a failure and we get a vivid picture of the unhappiness of the couple. The husband was stubborn, demanded submission to his authority; the wife was shy and quick to anger; the wife was completely ignorant of sex and could never forget her first nights of marriage.

In her second life the unhappy young wife began slowly to feel various religious doubts. She turned to the great Dr. Pusey before she finally gave up her religion:

When she asked if he would recommend some books to throw light on the subject, his only answer was, "No, no; you have read too much already. You must pray; you must pray" (p. 48).

Mrs. Besant was forced to leave her husband. We learn a good deal in a moving way about Victorian law as it applied to marriage when Mrs. Besant obtained a legal separation. Finally, sometime later, she lost control even of her children. She had the problem of self-support. She wrote; she became close to Charles Bradlaugh, the great leader of secularism and free thought. She learned that she was an effective speaker and became a leader in the movements for free thought, freedom of expression, birth control, feminism, and radical politics.

In her third career she became interested in science, was one of the first women to study at the University of London, and was a vigorous supporter of Bradlaugh's efforts to be seated, despite his atheism, in Parliament.

In 1884 she developed an interest in socialism, joined the Fabian Society, and became a close friend of G. B. Shaw. Mrs. Besant, in fact, was responsible for his beginning his career as an art, music, and drama critic. In her various publications she also printed much of his early fiction. She was concerned about labor organization, succeeded in creating one of the earliest effective unions, and was elected to the London school board. Slowly she shifted away from the Fabian Society to the more radical Social Democratic Federation.

In 1889 her fifth life came suddenly. She became a Theosophist, a chief lieutenant of Madame Blavatsky. Mr. Nethercot doubts that Shaw's recollections of his shock at the discovery of Mrs. Besant's conversion are accurate. Nevertheless, the shift from rationalist materialism and free thinking to the mysticism and occultism of Theosophy was a major one. As in every other shift in her public career, however, Mrs. Besant quickly took a position of leadership. As

life number five came to an end in 1893, Mrs. Besant left England for her new and equally vigorous life in India.

Throughout her career Mrs. Besant was indefatigable in her organizing, publishing, writing, and speaking. Coming home one time after midnight from a meeting of busmen whom she was trying to organize, Mrs. Besant said to her friend Burrows: "Herbert, I wonder why on earth we go on doing this." He thought and rendered his only answer, "We can't help it!" (p. 265).

This well-written, often witty, and most scholarly book has a variety of interests for the reader. Mr. Besant is interesting as both a person and a Victorian type, and fortunately her literary and journalistic career led her to leave ample records. She moves through the 1870's and 1880's in some kind of contact with most of the intellectual currents of her time—in religion, science, politics, labor, agriculture, education, and literature. From the particular point of view of literature, we can get from this biography a sense of the environment in which William Morris and George Bernard Shaw worked, certainly not the complete environment but the one most frequently neglected. To a lesser degree, one gets a view, too, of Oscar Wilde and the early W. B. Yeats that is most instructive.

If one were to cavil at anything in this excellent biography, one would wonder how, even before the inflation of this century, Mrs. Besant provided "some thirty-six thousand lunches for needy children" for 185 pounds (p. 271). More importantly, it seems to me that Mr. Nethercot has possibly permitted his authoritative knowledge of Shaw to lead him to look at William Morris through Shaw's not completely objective eyes. For example, in a way Shaw sometimes did, Mr. Nethercot speaks of "The rather naive William Morris, whose Socialist League and its magazine were being stolen away from him little by little by the anarchistically inclined members of his board and who would have done better to stick to his medieval epics and his Morris chairs" (p. 279). A little earlier there is a contrary reference (p. 241) to the "anarchistic leanings" of Morris.

The description of the Socialist League (p. 243) as tending toward anarchism and opposing reform through parliamentary measures is also perhaps misleading. Morris and others in the League who opposed the anarchist group nevertheless also opposed what they called palliative socialism, reform through parliamentary measures. In fact, Morris—by contrast to Shaw and the Fabians—was advocating what Mr. Nethercot later calls (p. 278) "down-the-line" Marxism; i.e., he was not in the group of "possibilists" (p. 279) to which Mrs. Besant and Hyndman belonged.

It is hard to believe that the second volume of Mrs. Besant's biography can be as full of interesting characters, events, and movements as this first volume, but one looks forward to it eagerly.

GEORGE WAGGONER  
University of Kansas

## BOOKS RECEIVED

(The appearance of a book in *Books Received*  
does not preclude its subsequent review)

*Plays (Man and Superman, Arms and the Man, Mrs. Warren's Profession, Candida)*,  
by George Bernard Shaw, Signet Book, New York, 1960, 448 pp. Price \$ .50.

*Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality*, by Siegfried Kracauer, Oxford University Press, New York, 1960, 364 pp. Price \$10.00.

*The Complete Plays of John M. Synge*, Random House (Vintage Books), New York, 1960, 268 pp. Price \$1.25.

*The Complete Plays of W. D. Howells*, edited by Walter J. Meserve, New York University Press, New York, 1960, 649 pp. Price \$15.00.

*The Early Public Theatre in France*, by W. L. Wiley, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1960, 326 pp. Price \$6.75.

*Charles Macklin: An Actor's Life*, by William W. Appleton, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1960, 280 pp. Price \$5.00.

*Scenes and Machines on the English Stage during the Renaissance*, by Lily B. Campbell, Barnes and Noble, New York, 1960, 302 pp. Price \$7.50.

*Hrotsvitha: The Theatricality of Her Plays*, by Sister Mary Marguerite Butler, Philosophical Library, Inc., New York, 1960, 234 pp. Price \$6.00.

*Theatre in the East: A Survey of Asian Dance and Drama*, by Faubion Bowers, Grove Press, Inc., New York, 1960, 374 pp. Price \$2.95.

*The Dimensional Structure of Time Together with the Drama and its Timing*, by Irvin Morgenstern, Philosophical Library, Inc., New York, 1960, 174 pp. Price \$3.75.

*Form and Meaning in Drama*, by H. D. F. Kitto, Barnes & Noble, Inc. (University Paperbacks), New York, 1960, 541 pp. Price \$1.95.

*Children's Theatre*, by Jed H. Davis and Mary Jane Watkins with the collaboration of Roger M. Busfield, Jr., Harper & Brothers, New York, 1961, 416 pp. Price \$6.00.

*Sean O'Casey: The Man and His Work*, by David Krause, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1960, 340 pp. Price \$4.50.

*American Dramatic Literature: Ten Modern Plays in Historical Perspective*, by Jordan Y. Miller, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1961, 641 pp. Price \$6.75.

*Playwrights on Playwriting*, edited by Toby Cole with an introduction by John Gassner, Hill and Wang, New York, 1960, 299 pp. Price \$3.95.

*A Source Book in Theatrical History (Sources of Theatrical History)*, by A. M. Nagler, Dover Publications, Inc., New York, 1960, 611 pp. Price \$2.75.

*A Whole Theatre of Others*, edited by Arthur Brown, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1961, 174 pp. Price \$1.75.

*The Genius of the Irish Theater*, edited by Sylvan Barnet, Morton Berman, and William Burto, A Mentor Book (The New American Library), New York, 1960, 368 pp. Price \$.75.

*Play-making: A Manual of Craftsmanship*, by William Archer with a new introduction by John Gassner, Dover Publications, Inc., New York, 1960, 277 pp. Price \$1.75.

*The Development of Dramatic Art*, by Donald Clive Stuart, Dover Publications, Inc., New York, 1960, 677 pp. Price \$2.45.

*Masterpieces of the Russian Drama*, 2 vols. selected and edited by George Rapall Noyes, Dover Publications, Inc., 1960, New York, 902 pp. Price \$2.00 each.

*The Theme of Loneliness in Modern American Drama*, by Winifred L. Dusenbury, University of Florida Press, Gainesville, Florida, 1960, 231 pp. Price \$6.50.

